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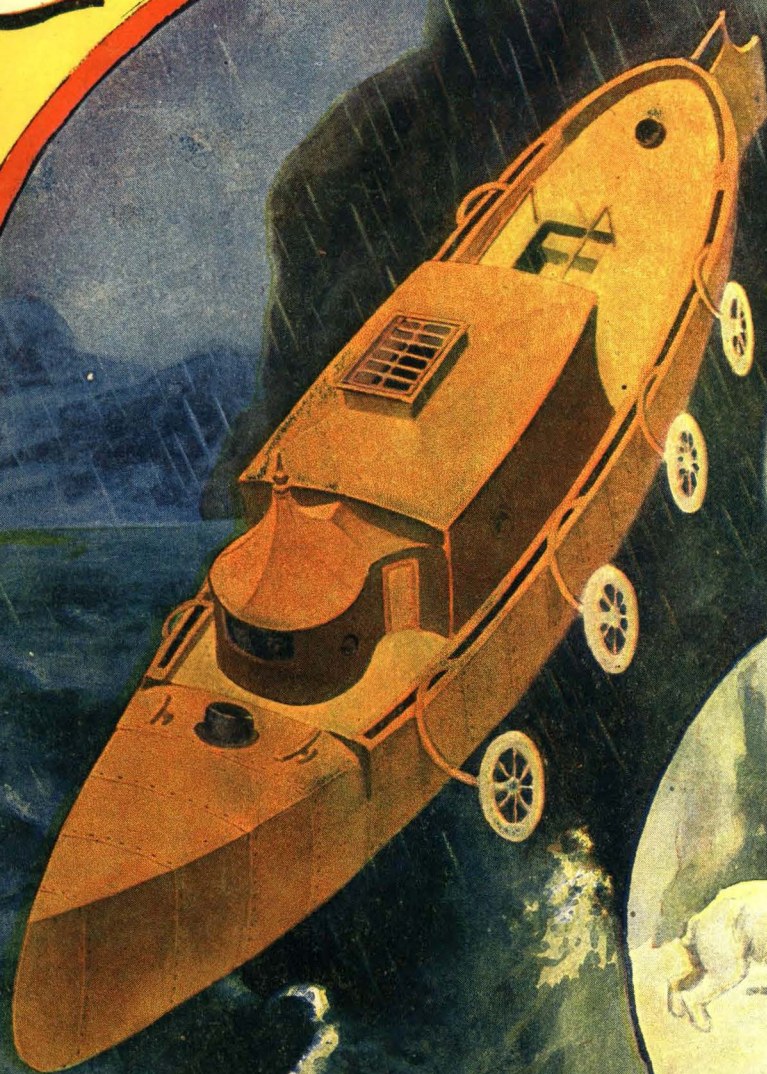
FIVE CENTS

# BRAVE AND BOLD

A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EVERY WEEK

No 17

THE  
**ELECTRIC TRAVELER**  
or Underground  
to the Pole



BY  
THE AUTHOR  
OF "DICK HAZEL"

The next instant the "Traveler" made a leap as though imbued with life, and went shooting, bow foremost to the lake below.

# BRAVE & BOLD

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## THE ELECTRIC TRAVELER;

OR,

## Underground to the Pole.

By the author of "THE SEA WANDERER."

### CHAPTER. I

#### A CURIOUS INVENTION.

Will Carding was hurrying home from the shop in which he was employed, one evening in the early spring, when he was accosted by a gray-bearded stranger.

At first Will took the stranger for a "bunco-steerer," he acted so queer, but before a dozen words had passed between them he found out his mistake.

"Well, sir, what business have you with me?" he asked, as he halted in front of the man.

"Excuse me, young man, but you work for an electrical concern, do you not?"

"I do," and the boy scratched his head, wondering what was coming next.

"You are pretty well versed in electricity, if I understand rightly."

"Well, yes, sir; I have made a pretty good study of it during the two years I have been in the business. My desire to learn all about it, and the fact of my having a boss who is willing to show me all he can, makes me know what I do."

"You don't get very large wages, I have reason to believe," and the stranger looked at him, expectantly.

"No, sir, I do not," replied Will, after a slight pause; "and that is not the worst of it, either. There is talk of the shop shutting down in a few days, work is so slack."

"Well, then, young fellow, I am going to offer you a job that will pay you much better than the one you are on at present."

"What is it, sir?"

As Will Carding asked the question his eyes sparkled. He was an orphan, and, consequently, had to earn his own living. If the job offered him was in his favorite line—electrical—and was honest and legitimate, he was ready to take it.

Instead of enlightening him any further on the subject the gray-bearded stranger took a card from his pocket and handed it to the boy.

"Call to see me at eight o'clock sharp, and we will talk the matter over," said he, and then he left as abruptly as he had approached the boy.

The scene just described took place on Exchange Street, in the city of Buffalo.

Will Carding, who was a bright, athletic young fellow of eighteen, was on his way to his boarding house, after putting in a good day's work at the electrical concern of Sharp, Wells & Co.

The boy remained standing on the sidewalk for fully a minute, gazing at the card, which bore the inscription:

"PROFESSOR DOLLIVER LANGSHAN."

Beneath the name was the name and number of a street on the lake front.

"That is a queer place for a professor to live, or even have his office," mused Will, as he started off on a brisk walk. "Well, anyhow, I'll drop around and see him; perhaps there is something in it for me."

When the boy had arrived at his boarding house and eaten his supper, it was past seven o'clock.

As it was a good twenty minutes' walk to the address the man had given him, he left the house soon after and wended his way in that direction.

Punctually at eight o'clock he halted in front of a tumble-down shanty and knocked at the door.

It was opened immediately by the gray-bearded professor, who greeted Will with a nod of pleasure.

"Ah! you are on time, I see," he exclaimed, rubbing his hands. "Step right in!"

Our hero obeyed, and found himself in a seven-by-nine room, fitted up exactly like an old bachelor's quarters.

At the invitation, Will took a seat on a rickety chair.

The professor closed and locked the door, and then deposited himself in a chair in front of his visitor.

"Now, then, young man, to business," said he, rubbing his hands in his peculiar manner. "In the first place, your name?"

"William Carding."

"Your age?"

"Eighteen."

"Do you like adventure?"

"Yes, sir."

"If my proposition does not suit you, will you promise to keep it a secret?"

"I will."

"Well, then, step this way."

The professor arose, and lighting a lamp, opened a door in the rear of the room.

Will followed him through, and down a flight of dirty steps, much mystified as to what secret the man was about to divulge.

At the foot of the steps the professor opened another door, and then by the dim light of the lamp Will beheld a long, narrow workshop.

Full of curiosity, he stepped inside.

The professor quickly lighted three more lamps, and then pointed to a long object in the center of the room, which looked like some new-fashioned boat.

"What do you think of that?" said he, proudly.

"It surely is a wonderfully contrived vessel," replied Will, after a pause.

And so it was.

In length it measured thirty-eight feet, and was about twelve in width at the widest part.

The bow, or forward part, was long and tapering, while the after-part narrowed gracefully to about four feet.

The depth was about eight feet from the top of the cabin-house to the bottom, and the inside was fitted up in a really expensive manner.

There were no visible signs of anything that would propel the strange craft, and Will asked how she was to be forced through the water.

Professor Langshan stepped on the deck from a small ladder.

"When she is in the water this will cause her to move," said he.

As he spoke he pressed a knob, and a propelling screw and a rudder noiselessly assumed their proper positions at the stern.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Will.

The professor smiled.

"She is now in shape to travel by water," said he. "Now wait till I show you how she will travel by land."

A sharp click and the screw and rudder disappeared.

The next moment he pulled a lever, and eight wide-tired wheels arose from the deck and dropped over either side.

Although the vessel was on stocks at least three feet high, the wheels touched the floor of the workshop.

Will could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw this.

The mechanical work on the vessel, or whatever it could be called, was the greatest thing he had ever seen.

"There she is," spoke up the professor, as he stepped to the side of the boy with a serious look in his eyes. "I built every inch of her myself. The whole thing weighs but a ton, and she is strong enough to stand almost any kind of a shock. The hull is made of white wood, rubber and thin copper plates."

"What is to be your motive power?" asked Will.

"Now we have at last come to the point!" exclaimed Professor Langshan, eagerly. "My boy, I want you to fix that; I have tried repeatedly and failed each time."

"Of course, you propose to run her by electricity?"

"Certainly."

"I might be able to help you out."

"I thought you could, or I should never have sought you out."

"Show me your engine."

"Come aboard; I will place the whole thing in your hands. I am a rich man and will pay you well for your work. I have constructed this remarkable vessel for a great purpose, and if you will enlist your services with me and go with me on my journey I will pay you a salary of two hundred dollars a month."

"Where do you propose to go?" asked Will, his eyes sparkling at the offer.

"To the North Pole," was the calm reply.

Our hero gazed at the man in mute astonishment.

Was Professor Langshan crazy, or was the whole thing but a delusion?

## CHAPTER II.

### OUR HERO PREVENTS A MURDER.

On the Saturday night following Will Carding was laid off from the electrical works along with a dozen or more, many of whom were skilled mechanics.

Will was perfectly satisfied, for he was going to leave, anyhow, having accepted the professor's offer.

Our hero had soon learned that Professor Langshan meant what he said, and becoming more interested every moment, he soon was completely wrapped up in the idea of making a journey to the Polar Sea.

For three nights Will worked on the engine and batteries, and then, at last, he solved the problem.

To describe the joy of Professor Dolliver Langshan when he saw Will press a button and cause the screw to revolve with the velocity of the wind, would be a decidedly hard thing to do.

It was on Friday night that success crowned our hero's efforts, and as he prepared to leave near midnight, the professor informed him that he would begin laying stores for their trip the very next day.

At the suggestion of Will the wonderful invention was christened the *Electric Traveler*, which was a very suitable title.

"If you can hire a good, faithful man, do so, and bring him here to-morrow night," were the professor's words as he took his departure.

All day Saturday the boy had these words in his mind, but not until he had left the shop did he decide upon who to hire.

One of the men who had been laid off from the shop was a good-natured, whole-souled Irishman named Danny Dagan, who had been a sort of helper, at very small wages.

He had often done favors for Will, and consequently the boy liked him pretty well.

As our hero started for his boarding house the Irishman overtook him.

"Say, Will," said he, "I wonder what I will be after goin' at now? Sure when I pay me board I will not have over three dollars to me name, an' no work, begob!"

"You are looking for a job, then, Danny?"

"Sure I am, sir; an' I must have it, or, begob! I'll starve."

"What kind of a job do you want, Danny?"

"Any kind at all, sir."

"Would you like to leave Buffalo and go traveling?"

"I would, sir, if I could get paid for it."

"I think I can get you a job, Danny."

"Have ye got one yezself, me boy?"

"I have; and it is a good one, too," replied Will.

"Well, if you get me a job now, I'll bless ye as long as you live, begob!" said the Irishman.

"I'll call for you as soon as I have eaten my supper, and take you where you can get the job."

With these words the two parted—the Irishman full of joy at the prospect of a job so soon, and our hero well satisfied that Danny Dagan would suit the professor to a T.

Will found Danny ready when he called for him after supper, and together the two wended their way to the hidden workshop of Professor Langshan.

As Will expected, the professor took a notion to Danny, and it did not take a great while before a bargain was struck.

Though the Irishman did not like the idea of making a journey to the ice regions, he was satisfied to go so long as Will was to accompany him.

The poor fellow's hair almost stood up when he beheld the beautifully modeled vessel, and when the professor showed him where his quarters were to be, he thanked his stars at having secured such a job.

The *Electric Traveler's* owner had been busy all day in putting in supplies—such as would be needed to run the batteries.

About one-third of the vessel's room was utilized for this purpose, and the professor reckoned that they had enough electricity on board to last them a year.

That night the wonderful vessel was launched, and after a good trial trip on the lake she was pronounced ready for business.

Will even dropped the wheels near a bit of shelving shore on the Canada side, and ran her high and dry on shore.

Professor Langshan was highly elated at the success of his invention, and after the *Electric Traveler* had been safely housed in the workshop where she had been built, he conducted Will and Danny upstairs and bade them be seated.

"I will now tell you something that I have hitherto kept from you," said he. "I have more than one reason in making a journey to the frozen deep.

"Of course, I desire to discover the North Pole, if it is any way possible; but there is something of more importance that calls me to the Polar Sea.

"About a year ago a vessel was fitted out in London for the purpose of exploring the ice regions.

"The man in charge of the expedition was an old enemy of mine—though several years my junior, he is my bitterest foe; and the cause of this is because he enticed my young wife away with him on his expedition to the northern realms. He not only did this, but kidnaped her younger sister as well.

"This man is very rich, and he spared no money in building and fitting out a ship, keeping it a profound secret all the while.

"I was old, and foolish, perhaps, and did not notice the attentions this man paid to my wife; and I would never have known what became of her had it not been for her younger sister, who was kidnaped, as I have said.

"Just as the *Invincible*—the name of my enemy's ship—sailed, my wife's sister managed to bribe one of the seamen to send a letter ashore to me.

"That told me all, and since that time I have been busy in constructing this vessel, which we have named the *Electric Traveler*, for the purpose of finding the villain, righting my wrongs—as far as is possible under the circumstances—and to bring the kidnaped young lady safely back to her home in England."

Here the professor became very much excited, and Will could see that there were tears in his eyes.

"If the *Invincible* is anywhere in the land of the living, I am sure we can find her," said he.

"Sure, begob!" exclaimed Danny.

"Well," remarked Professor Langshan, brightening up, "I have ordered everything needful in the line of provisions and weapons, and we will start on this peculiar journey on Tuesday morning at one o'clock sharp."

"I am ready," returned our hero, who was growing more enthusiastic every hour, in anticipation of the proposed wonderful journey.

"Sure, an' I am ready to start this blessed minute," put in the Irishman.

It was decided that the two should take up their quarters with the professor at once, and they did so, occupying the cabin on the vessel.

During Monday more than one load of boxes and bales was deposited at the door of the shanty-like place occupied by Professor Langshan.

But as he had his sign out as an electrician no one marveled at seeing goods conveyed to his establishment.

At midnight the work of storing the *Electric Traveler* was completed.

As they were to start in an hour, Will concluded to take a stroll about the docks for a few minutes to take a last look at Buffalo.

It had set in raining early in the evening, but, attired in a rubber coat and boots, Will did not mind this.

As he walked upon the planking, directly underneath which was the workshop and the wonderful *Traveler*, he detected the sounds of hurried footsteps approaching.

There seemed to be something suspicious in the sounds, and acting on an impulse, Will hastily withdrew to a dark corner.

The next moment he discerned the forms of two men approaching, carrying a cumbersome object between them.

They did not pause until they reached the string-piece that overlooked the black waters of the lake.

"Now, over with him!" Will heard one of the men say. "The job pays us five hundred, though I can't see why any one would pay that money to get rid of a boy like this feller seems ter be."

"It makes no difference to us," was the reply of the villain's companion. "Though he seems to be a poor lad, he might stand between the man that hired us and a fortune. And as for throwing him over right away, why, you know, the fellow wanted to see it done with his own eyes, and he must be at least a couple of minutes behind us."

"All right, then; we'll wait."

Will Carding waited to hear no more.

His rubber boots made no noise, and as quick as a flash he rushed to the door of the professor's shanty and entered it.

Down the steps he went to the workshop below, and not noticing the startled inquiries of the professor and Danny, he shoved back the sliding door that opened to the waters of the lake.

He was not an instant too soon, for just then there was a muffled cry and a loud splash right in front of him.

Seizing a boat-hook, the boy thrust it out into the water.

To his great joy he caught something.

Danny had now reached the spot, and together the two hauled it in.

It was nothing more nor less than a heavy sack with a struggling figure inside of it.

As soon as it had been safely deposited upon the floor of the workshop the door was pushed to and the sack hastily ripped open.

The face and form of a boy about Will's own age was revealed to light.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE JOURNEY IS BEGUN.

The boy who had come so near to being cruelly drowned in the waters of the lake was not injured in the least. In fact, our hero had hauled him out so quickly that the water had scarcely penetrated some parts of the sack.

He was bound and gagged, and Will hastened to release him.

The poor fellow could scarcely find words to express his thanks at his deliverance from a certain death, and tears of joy fairly trickled down his face.

"Don't mention it," spoke up Will. "What else could I do but to make an effort to save you, when I saw your would-be murderers getting ready to throw you in the lake? Now, since you are alive and unharmed, tell us all about how you came to be in such a perilous position."

"My name is Tom Hartley," was the reply. "All that I know about the terrible scrape I was in is that I was seized by two men just as I was going up the steps to my boarding house. It was all a mistake, I am sure, for one of the men called me 'Carding,' or some name like that."

"Carding, did you say?" exclaimed our hero, in surprise. "Why, that is my name!"

"Is that so? Then maybe you are the young fellow who used to occupy the room I have in the boarding house on L—Street."

"I guess I am," said Will. "The number is one hundred and eight, and Mrs. Brown is the lady who keeps the house."

"Exactly! Then you may depend upon it that they took me for you. Anyhow, there is no reason why anybody should want to put me out of the way."

"Nor me, either," replied Will, much puzzled. "From what you say, it looks as though it was me they were after. But there always has been a sort of mystery about my life, and now that this has happened, I do remember being followed on several occasions in the past few weeks by a dark-faced man. But we will let it drop. You are safe, and I am, too, so don't let us bother any more about it."

When it became known that Tom Hartley was the pilot of a tug that plied in the waters of Lake Erie, the professor promptly offered him a good position aboard the *Traveler*.

The offer was such a tempting one that the young fellow jumped at it.

Our friends were short-handed, anyhow, and a glance at the frank, open face of Tom Hartley told them that he was just the one they wanted.

The boy sat down and hastily penned a letter to his folks in Detroit, telling them that he had accepted an excellent job, and would not be home for a year, perhaps.

This was dropped in a letter-box outside by Danny, and then young Hartley said he was ready to go on duty at once.

It was now very near the hour of their departure, and the professor placed the crew of his vessel as follows:

Professor Dolliver Langshan, captain; William Carding, engineer; Thomas Hartley, pilot; Danny Dagan, deckhand and general assistant.

It lacked two minutes to one o'clock when the sliding door was opened, and two minutes later the prow of the *Electric Traveler* struck the water in the same spot where the boy who was now at her wheel had so nearly lost his life less than an hour before.

"Good-by to the old shanty and workshop," said the professor. "I have paid a year's rent in advance for them, but it is not likely that I will ever have any use for them again. We are now off for the regions of perpetual ice and snow!"

Away sped the wonderful little vessel across the waters of the lake like a thing of life.

Tom Hartley soon showed that he knew his business well, and he piloted the boat straight to the point where he was directed.

When he had engaged himself to go on a journey to the Polar regions, he regarded the *Traveler* as a vessel solely for the water, and expected that they were to go that way, though how, he scarcely knew.

As they neared the Canadian shore, the professor turned a brilliant electric light on in the pilot house, reflecting a stream of light for fifty yards ahead of the vessel's prow.

"Make for that strip of sand to the left," said he, addressing the young pilot. "We will leave the water there."

"Leave the water!" and Tom Hartley looked at him in amazement.

"Yes; this vessel can travel by sea or land."

The boy said no more, but, with his hands on the wheel spokes, he kept a steady course.

Swish—swish! went the *Electric Traveler* through the water, every portion of her machinery working to perfection.

As they rapidly neared the shore, Will Carding seized the lever and lowered the wheels.

In less than a minute the eight wheels of the vessel struck the bottom, and they were no longer sailing, but riding.

The same wheel that governed the rudder connected with the two forward wheels of the invention, and these could be turned either way, thus guiding the vessel in any desirable direction.

Bump—bump! whirr—whirr!

The next minute the *Traveler* left the water entirely, and went rolling gracefully up a gentle incline to the level country above.

Though Tom Hartley was completely dumfounded, he did not allow his hands to leave the wheel, and kept her as steady as a clock.

"We will now strike a course direct for Hudson Bay," observed the professor, producing a compass. "Nothing short of a steep mountain or a ravine can stop us, and if we meet any of those we will go around them. Our electric light affords us the opportunity of making nearly as good time in the night as in the day."

But, as they were still in a civilized portion of the globe, our hero kept the speed of the *Traveler* down to about twelve miles an hour.

On they went, passing towns and villages, and in some cases going directly through them on their main streets.

Just at daylight in the morning the waters of Lake Ontario came in sight.

"We must hurry up and reach the lake," said the professor. "I calculated on entering it about this time. We may get into no end of trouble if we are seen riding overland in what looks to be naught but a boat."

Will turned on the currents a little stronger, and increased their speed to eighteen miles an hour.

It did not matter if their pathway was a little rough. The wheels contained rubber tires six inches in thickness, and an occasional bump did not materially affect them.

The rain was still falling as the day broke, and this made it rather difficult for them to see very far ahead.

Five minutes later they reached the very edge of the lake, and then, for the first time, they saw that they had run into a terrible danger.

They had swerved a trifle from the course laid out by the professor, and were now upon a bluff fully thirty feet above the water.

Owing to the falling rain and mist, they were within a length of the bluff's edge before they discovered the fact.

Will stopped the engine, and put on the brakes.

But too late! The next instant the *Traveler* made a leap as though imbued with life, and went shooting, bow foremost, to the lake below!

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### IN THE ICE REGIONS.

A cry of horror escaped the lips of Will Carding when he saw that the *Traveler* was bound to leap from the bluff into the lake.

But not so with Professor Langshan.

As quick as a flash, he seized a lever, and pulled it back with all his strength.

The effect of his action was truly startling.

In the twinkling of an eye every aperture in the deck and cabin house was closed by water-proof covers.

The next moment the prow of the *Traveler* struck the water with a loud splash.

Luckily, the water was very deep at that point, and down she went, until all save the stern was completely submerged. Then a quivering sensation was felt, and up she came to the surface like a cork.

A look of extreme satisfaction shone on the face of the professor, while the pallid countenances of his companions gradually assumed their natural color.

The *Traveler* was now gliding slowly forward from the impetus of her sudden leap.

Calmly the professor threw back the lever, and the cool, damp air of the lake was wafted in upon those inside.

It was several seconds before a word was spoken, and then the professor broke the silence.

"You see, I have provided for all emergencies of that kind," said he.

"Yes," returned Will, with a sigh of relief; "if you had not——"

"We would all have been to the bottom of Lake Ontario!" put in Tom Hartley.

"We would have been drowned, begob!" added Danny.

It took some time for the excitement caused by their recent thrilling situation to wear off from our friends, but long before it did all hands were satisfied that the *Electric Traveler* and the manner in which she worked was nothing short of perfection itself.

If we were to dwell on all the incidents that took place on the journey to the ice regions, we would use up all the space allotted to us, and then our story would be but fairly begun.

But, as we are to deal with what happened after the *Electric Traveler* reached the northern regions, we will skip all minor details, and will take up the thread of our narrative from the

morning of July 2d, 18—, just three months after our friends left Buffalo to go on their wonderful journey.

On this particular morning we find the wonderful invention of Professor Langshan resting cozily on a level tract of barren land at the southern extremity of Cape Lincoln.

The weather here was comparatively warm, though snow and ice could be seen on every hand, except in occasional spots where the Arctic sun shone with full force.

In these places the clayey soil was covered with a sparse vegetation, consisting of mossy grasses and lichens. The coast was enlivened by great numbers of walruses and wild geese. Occasionally a white bear could be seen on the top of some bleak, misshapen rock; but, beyond these things, there was no sign of life whatever.

To the northeast of them was a vast field of ice, which, the professor said, would not be likely to break up before the first of August.

In spite of their long, tedious journey, the *Traveler's* crew were all well and hearty. They had steadily journeyed over land, water and ice since their departure.

It was the intention of the professor to proceed northward, through Smith's Sound, over the ice.

They had been resting where they now were since the day before. Some of the delicate machinery of the *Traveler* needed overhauling, and Will and the professor were busy attending to it.

Just before noon they pronounced everything in perfect order, and after some wild geese and a bear had been slain they took what they wanted of the meat and again set out on their course northward.

Since they left the limits of civilization the *Electric Traveler* presented somewhat of a different appearance.

A double netting of tempered steel surrounded her deck to the height of six feet; and through this, at regular intervals, were loopholes for rifles.

In the bow was a small brass pivot gun, which could be aimed and fired from the pilot house.

The walls of the cabin were nearly covered by racks, which were filled with weapons, showing that, in case the *Traveler* got into a scrimmage, she would prove anything but a mean foe to encounter.

The cabin was heated by electricity, and no matter how cold the weather was, our friends were always comfortable.

When they wished to go outside, they donned their Arctic clothing of wool and fur.

It was shortly after the dinner hour when they set out, taking a diagonal course across the cape.

A few hours later they took to the ice, and then the way they went skimming along, dodging about here and there to keep clear of the hummocks, was something marvelous.

Both Will and Tom, and the Irishman as well, had long since become accustomed to the life they had been leading for the past three months, and they now thoroughly enjoyed it.

When night came, there was no darkness, for the simple reason that it was the season of the year when the sun never set in that region.

Of course, the light at times was very dim, for the Arctic sun has but little power when at its best.

But something worse than darkness overtook them about an hour later. A keen wind from the east began blowing, and presently a blinding snowstorm set in.

Though they had encountered frequent snowstorms during their journey, this was the worst by far they had yet experienced.

But the professor had set his course by compass, and, with the electric light shining in full glare, they kept on.

Every opening was closed tightly, save a ventilation in the roof of the pilot house, and, should they suddenly plunge into open water, there would be no danger.

But no such thing occurred, and, picking their way between the drifts and ice hummocks, they kept on till midnight.

Then, selecting a sheltered spot behind a huge block of ice, they came to a halt.

Then all hands turned in to get a few hours' sleep.

It was probably eight in the morning when Will Carding arose.

His companions were still sleeping soundly, and he did not choose to awaken them.

"I guess I'll go outside and see how it looks," he muttered, donning his fur clothing. "From the pilot house here, it looks as if the *Traveler* is about buried in the snow."

Taking a rifle from one of the racks—for all hands made a rule never to go outside without a weapon—he opened the door and stepped upon the deck.

The air was so cold that at first it nearly took his breath away, but, becoming used to it, he stepped boldly forward.

The storm had cleared, but, as he expected, the *Traveler* was nearly buried in the snow.

The huge block of ice that had partially shielded the vessel from the storm was before him, and Will determined to mount this and see how things looked.

He experienced little or no difficulty in reaching its top, and found that he had an excellent view of the surrounding ice field.

As his eyes turned to the north, he uttered a startled cry of surprise.

Before him, about a quarter of a mile distant, he beheld a ship wedged in the ice!

But that was not all that he saw, for almost directly beneath him a still more startling scene met his eyes.

Running toward the ship, with all her might, was a young and pretty girl, attired in the regulation Arctic costume, while close at her heels was a monster polar bear, with wide open jaws!

## CHAPTER V.

### THE INVINCIBLE.

When Will Carding beheld the startling scene before him, he was too astonished to move.

But he recovered himself almost instantly. He had no time to speculate as to what the girl was doing in that frozen, out-of-the-way place; she was in danger of her life, and he must save her!

The next moment his rifle flew to his shoulder.

A quick, sure aim, and then the report rang out on the clear, frosty air.

The bear reeled, and then, staggering a few paces, fell dead.

As soon as the girl heard the report of our hero's rifle, and saw the bear fall, she, woman-like, fainted.

Will descended from the pile of ice with all possible speed.

As he reached the level, he beheld several men hastily approaching from the ship.

Our hero started on a sharp run over the frozen snow, and reached the spot where the girl had fallen in advance of the men.

The girl opened her eyes just as he reached her.

The boy promptly assisted her to her feet, and asked her if she was injured in any way. She replied in the negative, and then hastened to thank him for saving her life.

At that moment the men came up.

They seemed to be much astonished at meeting Will, but appeared respectful enough.

"Young man, where is your ship?" asked one, who was evidently the captain.

"She lies over there beyond that ice mountain," our hero replied, pointing to the mound of ice blocks, which really was tall enough to conceal the masts of a full-rigged ship.

"What is the name of your vessel?"

"The *Traveler*."

"Well, I am Captain Sylvester, of the exploring ship *Invincible*, which lies over there wedged in the ice."

At the mention of the vessel's name, Will gave a start.

Surely, that was the name of the ship Professor Langshan was looking for!

But he concluded to say nothing about it till he got back to his own vessel.

"Where are you bound for?" asked Captain Sylvester, after a pause.

"For the North Pole!" replied our hero.

"I have a rival, then," was the smiling reply. "That is my destination, young man. The *Invincible* has been lying wedged in the ice for nearly a week now; but to-day she will go out. During the past three days we have been sinking dynamite cartridges in the ice at intervals of five hundred feet apart. In less than an hour from now I shall explode them by electricity, and then the floe will be broken up."

"That is a very good idea," returned Will.

"Do you intend to use any explosive matter to force your way through the ice?"

"No, sir; we do not let the ice stop us in the least."

Captain Sylvester looked at the boy in surprise. Then it suddenly occurred to him that he was being made a fool of.

"I guess you are as far North as you will ever get, young man," said he, rather coldly; "and, as we are not likely to meet again, I will bid you good-morning, at the same time thanking you for saving this young lady's life, who, by the way, is my sister-in-law."

With these words, he turned on his heel and offered his arm to the girl, who, strange to say, promptly refused it.

With a look that was half thankful, half wistful, she slowly turned and followed in the tracks of the captain and the men, who were returning to the ship.

Once she seemed on the verge of pausing to say something to our hero, but a sharp gesture from the captain caused her to change her mind.

Will stood leaning on his rifle, with one foot on the body of the bear, watching the party as they returned to the ship.

Suddenly he saw the girl drop some white object—on purpose, it seemed.

"I must have that," he muttered; "she means that I shall."

Waiting until the party had boarded the ship, he hurried forward to the spot where he had seen the object fall.

In less than a minute he had it in his hand, and found it was a delicately-engraved card, bearing the name:

"ENID STRATHMORE."

"Whew!" whistled the boy. "If that is really the *Invincible*, the professor is searching for, this must be the young lady who was kidnaped. She is a very pretty girl, and if she wants to get away from that ship she will only have to say the word and we will take her aboard the *Traveler*."

Full of curious meditations, Will started back to the wonderful electric vessel, that lay half buried in the snow.



## BRAVE AND BOLD.

He had scarcely done so, when Captain Sylvester touched the button that fired the dynamite that had been placed at various points over the ice field.

When the deafening commotion had subsided, Enid realized that the ship was under way.

She could hear the steady thump of the engines, and the gentle, swaying motion told her that they were once more afloat.

The *Invincible* had not sailed to the Arctic regions at the time Professor Langshan supposed she did. The captain changed his mind after starting, and took a six months' cruise about the southern seas, after which he set out for the north, with a shipload of supplies for such an expedition.

A group of three now stood on the stem of the noble ship, intently watching some object that was skimming along in their wake, a little over a mile astern.

The three men who constituted the group consisted of Captain Sylvester and his two trusted mates.

The captain was a little worried over the object which appeared to be chasing them, and gaining, at that.

"It can't be possible that it is some new-fangled craft?" observed the first mate, as he tendered the glass he had been looking through to the captain.

"That is just what it is," returned his superior officer, when he had taken a long and earnest look. "I wouldn't be surprised if that is the vessel that young fellow we met belongs to. But look there! If she is chasing us up, they will get badly left. The ice is closing in between us."

Captain Sylvester was right. The ice was fast coming together in the wake of the brig, and it really looked as though the queer-looking craft that was following them would be shut off.

Closer and closer came the strange vessel, until finally Captain Sylvester could discern the pilot house through the hazy gloom.

Only a quarter of a mile lay between them now, while the passage that intervened between the two ice floes was no wider than half that distance, and closing very rapidly.

Presently the floes came together with a crash, and the passage was closed.

A smile lit up the features of Captain Sylvester, and he watched to see what the strange craft would do.

To his surprise, her wonderful speed did not slacken a bit, and she was now dangerously near the ice.

Two minutes later the captain gave a startled cry, and turned as white as a sheet.

The mysterious craft that appeared to be pursuing them had left the water entirely, and was now speeding over the ice like the wind!

## CHAPTER VII.

## A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY.

Captain Sylvester evidently suspected the true state of affairs, for when the *Traveler* was within a furlong of his ship he ordered a shot to be fired at her.

Boom! As the report rang out, a ball came skipping along over the ice in dangerous proximity to the *Traveler*.

At the professor's command, Tom Hartley promptly changed their course to a huge hummock a few rods distant.

"Now, then," observed the professor, rubbing his hands, "my enemy has fired the first shot. Are you gentlemen willing to fight under me?"

"We will stick to you, professor," said Will, grimly.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, ere the report of

a gun was again heard, followed instantly by a rattling shower of splintered ice.

Will Carding's blood was now up.

Running the *Traveler's* bow around the edge of the hummock, he seized the lever that controlled the brass piece in the bow and directed its muzzle at the saucy *Invincible*.

Boom! The wonderful invention trembled at the recoil of the piece, and the next instant our friends saw the *Invincible's* bowsprit carried away.

"Good!" exclaimed Danny Dagan. "I don't think they will be so fresh now, begob!"

Just at this moment a rather peculiar thing happened.

It began snowing fiercely, and the temperature rapidly lowered.

In less than one minute our friends could not see a length ahead of them.

Of course, all hostilities promptly ceased.

"What is the next move?" asked our hero, after probably a minute's silence.

"We will take a northwesterly course, and proceed to the coast of Grinnell Land," returned the professor.

This being decided upon, Tom took the wheel, with a chart and compass before him. Will turned on the current, and the *Traveler* started ahead at the speed of about ten miles an hour.

In about three hours they struck the coast, and, finding a good place to land, they ran up a slight hill and proceeded on their way, due north.

About this time the storm cleared up, though it continued very cold.

Meantime, the *Traveler* kept steadily on her way, and about noon reached the foot of a perpendicular wall of rock.

A halt was made here, for the simple reason that it was impossible to proceed any farther in that direction.

A glance to their right disclosed the mouth of a tunnel-like opening of over twenty feet in diameter.

"I am going out to investigate that place," observed Will. "Something strikes me that we are at the mouth of a passage that proceeds on underground."

Will's words had the effect of making his companions more or less curious, and one and all proceeded to don their garments of fur.

A few minutes later they left the deck and started toward the opening.

Our hero was the first to reach it, and when he did so, he took an involuntary step backward and uttered a cry of surprise.

Leaning against the rocky wall, a few feet from the mouth of the opening, was a man, apparently guarding the place.

Will Carding's companions hastened to his side, but paused abruptly when they beheld the lone sentinel.

The man's face was turned directly toward them, though he did not appear to notice them in the least.

His body was warmly attired in garments of fur, and a silken kerchief of a bright yellow color was bound tightly about his ears.

His beard was long and bushy, while his raven-black hair hung below his shoulders.

At his side was an old-fashioned musket, which leaned against the wall of the passage.

For fully a minute our friends gazed at him, without uttering a word.

There was something awesome in the appearance of the stranger, he remained so silent and motionless.

At length Will spoke.

"Hello!" said he, in a rather loud voice.

There was no answer; the man did not even lift his head.

Again our hero called out.

But he might as well have spoken to a rock.

A cold shiver ran down the spine of Danny Dagan.

"Begob! I believe it is a ghost!" said he.

"We will see about that," exclaimed Will, stepping boldly forward.

He touched the man gently on the arm, and was about to speak to him, when a truly startling occurrence took place.

The lone sentinel pitched over and fell to the ground with a dull thud.

His form remained in the same bent shape, and, as he lay there on his back, with his head and feet sticking in the air, he looked ghastly and horrible enough.

Then, for the first time, it occurred to Will that the man was dead, and, not only dead, but frozen as solid as a block of marble.

"The man is dead, sure enough," said the professor, after a pause. "There is no telling how long the poor fellow has been in that position. See! the gun seems to be one of rather ancient manufacture."

"Look!" exclaimed Tom, suddenly, "there are some letters cut on that rock over there!"

His companions looked in the direction indicated, and saw that what he said was true.

Stepping forward, they read the following, rudely engraved on a flat surface of sandstone:

"TO THE NORTH POLE. DISCOVERED BY MILES SAYBROOK. 1834."

The crew of the *Electric Traveler* gazed at this inscription in breathless astonishment.

Then they decided to search the dead man's pockets.

But a well-worn jackknife and a silver tobacco-box were all that amounted to anything.

Leaving the body in the position it had fallen, they went aboard their vessel.

When they became thoroughly warm, the professor picked up the tobacco-box and opened it.

A folded piece of parchment was all that it contained.

This was spread upon the table, and there all hands leaned over and perused the following, written in a neat hand with a sort of greenish ink:

"This is to certify that Enóch Matthias, the bearer of this, has set out, by his own free will and accord, from the North Pole, where I am now living—and intend to stay as long as I do live—to try and reach the limits of civilization. If he succeeds, he will lead an exploring party to the most wonderful country ever dreamed of.  
MILES SAYBROOK."

That was all the parchment contained, and, much mystified, our friends laid it down.

"Too bad!" exclaimed the professor, shaking his head in a disappointed manner.

"What is too bad?" asked Tom.

"Why couldn't Miles Saybrook, while he was at it, describe the way to get to the Pole?" said the old man.

"The inscription on the sandstone shows us the way, I think," spoke up Will.

"And the passage looks plenty large enough to admit the *Traveler*," said Tom.

"It does at the mouth, anyway," replied the professor. "What do you say if we attempt to go through it?"

They were over an hour discussing the question before them, and, when they arose from the table, it was mutually agreed that they should enter the passage with the *Traveler* and proceed as far as they could.

Before they could enter the passage, the body of the frozen man had to be removed, and this they proceeded to do, giving it decent burial in an icy tomb on a neighboring hillside.

"Now, then," observed the professor, "we are about to start on the queerest journey that mortal man ever undertook. I firmly believe that we have struck the direct route to the North Pole, and that we will eventually reach it in advance of our enemy."

Full of enthusiasm, the crew took their places, and the prow of the *Traveler* was turned to the mouth of the passage.

It behooved them to travel very slowly, and as soon as they entered the place the powerful electric light was turned on.

This served to show them what was ahead of them, and when they had traversed about a mile they found that instead of growing smaller, the passage enlarged.

The way was smooth, and clear of all obstructions, down a gentle grade.

On the morning of the sixth day after entering the passage they beheld a faint white light ahead of them.

With a strange feeling in his breast, Will Carding pressed a button and increased the speed of the *Traveler*.

Five minutes later they emerged from the passage, and found themselves in broad daylight.

As they gazed from the window of the pilot house, our friends saw that they were upon the shore of a vast lake of surprisingly smooth water.

Out upon the deck they rushed, in breathless haste.

The air was balmy and delicious, and exclamations of joy went up from all hands.

In the dim distance they beheld what appeared to be a tall mountain peak, situated on a large island in the center of the lake, and they gazed at it long and earnestly, every one imbued with a strange feeling of awe and pleasure combined.

It suddenly occurred to the professor to get out his sextant and take an observation.

The sun, which shone with a strange, whitish glare, told him that he would have no trouble in doing so.

After five or ten minutes of calculation, the professor's countenance turned as pale as a sheet.

"Gentlemen," said he, solemnly, pointing to the mountain in the distance, "behold the North Pole!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AT THE NORTH POLE!

"Gentlemen, behold the North Pole!"

The words of Professor Langshan rang out with startling distinctness on the clear air.

For the space of several minutes none of his companions spoke.

That the professor understood what he was talking about they well knew, and it was, with a feeling of triumph, intermingled with a strange awe, that they gazed at the distant mountain peak.

"Well, if that is the central point of the Pole, I propose that we go on until we reach it!" exclaimed Will Carding, after a rather lengthy pause.

The *Traveler's* crew soon took their positions again, then they started down the gently-sloping beach to the waters of the vast lake, or whatever it could be called.

Professor Langshan's observations told him that the body of water must certainly be the open Polar Sea, but, as it looked more like a lake, he concluded to call it so until he found what it really was.

The *Traveler* glided gracefully into the smooth water; the

wheels were sprung out of sight, and away they went skimming toward the distant island.

In thirty minutes they were much nearer, and could see the land more distinctly.

As they neared the island, they saw that it was much larger than they had at first expected. It covered an area of perhaps sixty or seventy square miles, and was surrounded by an almost even belt of high ground.

In the center of the island arose the tall mountain they had seen in the distance.

As far as the eye could reach, they beheld a graceful, sloping shore of white sand, and back of this arose the natural rim of rocky matter.

They had not proceeded far before they began to notice various openings in the wall, which seemed to run through.

At length they came upon one that was large enough to admit the *Traveler*.

"Go on through," said the professor. "We will see what lies inside this natural inclosure."

The prow of the *Traveler* was turned into the passage, and they started slowly through.

As the distance through the wall was not over a hundred feet, they were soon on the inside.

Ejaculations of surprise came from the lips of our friends as they saw the sight before them.

They had entered the abode of human beings!

On every hand houses of very unique pattern could be seen, while crowds of queerly-attired people strolled through the single wide street.

For a moment the crew of the *Traveler* were too astonished to speak.

"So the North Pole is inhabited," said the professor, half musingly.

"It is, sure enough," returned our hero.

"The best thing we can do now is to look up Miles Saybrook, who is, no doubt, still here," observed Tom Hartley.

"If he is alive, you mean," added Will. "It is years ago since he wrote the message we found on the frozen sailor at the mouth of the tunnel in Grinnel Land."

"That is true," nodded the professor; "but still, for all that, he may be alive and well. At any rate, I think we had better go and look for him. We have not been noticed as yet, and, when we are, I don't think these people will offer us harm. Suppose we start ahead and enter that street; then go on a short distance and come to a halt? If the people want a parley with us, then we will gratify them."

His three friends nodded assent, and then the *Traveler*, which had not yet emerged entirely from the passage, was started slowly ahead.

A distance of about one-fourth of a mile lay between the high, rocky wall that surrounded the island and the base of the mountain that arose to such a towering height in its center.

The quaint-looking houses, before mentioned, were all built in two rows on this level tract, a broad, level street running between them.

Professor Langshan's wonderful invention was not noticed by the dwellers of the Pole until it had almost reached the nearest row of houses.

Then a shout went up from the throng of people in the vicinity, and a scene of wild commotion ensued.

As they neared the buildings they saw that they were apparently constructed of glass, or some like substance of a transparent nature.

Selecting a spot between two of the most pretentious of these, Tom turned her in that direction, and Will, at the same time, pressed a button and caused the *Traveler* to forge ahead like a flash.

Whizz—whirr! Away they sped between the two houses and out into the street of the undiscovered town at the very Pole, which our friends had always supposed to be but a barren waste of icy desolation.

The crowd of people were attired after the fashion of Chinese, though they did not resemble them in features, by any means.

On the contrary, all seemed to be of a blonde type.

None of them carried anything that looked like weapons, and this gave our friends courage to proceed and carry out their programme.

As the *Traveler* sped down the center of the street, Professor Langshan stood in the pilot house, bowing right and left to the astonished crowds, his shining, bald head and flowing beard giving him a very unique and imposing appearance.

Suddenly the professor stopped bowing, and, calling the attention of his companions, pointed ahead of him, excitedly.

They beheld a massive building situated in a large square, with a flag-staff reaching high into the air.

But that was not all.

From the staff, floating proudly to the breeze, was the Stars and Stripes!

## CHAPTER IX.

### CAPTAIN SYLVESTER AND HIS AIR SHIP.

Captain Sylvester, of the *Invincible*, was a shrewd, far-seeing man, even if he was a thorough villain.

When he saw the mysterious vessel that was pursuing his ship take to the ice, he conjectured at once that his mortal enemy—the husband of the woman who had committed suicide through remorse but a short time before—was on board of her.

He knew full well the inventive powers of Professor Langshan—no one knew this better than he, as the two had pondered and worked over more than one curious invention in the days long gone by.

But that was when Captain Sylvester and Professor Langshan were friends.

The captain of the *Invincible* had no sooner come to this conclusion than he gave orders to fire upon the rapidly-approaching craft, which was gliding over the ice much faster than it could go through the water.

The result of the firing is already known to the reader, and, when the blinding snowstorm set in, no one felt more relieved than did Captain Sylvester.

That he feared his enemy was plainly evident.

Leaving the deck in charge of his trusted mate, he went below to his private cabin.

Before sitting down he called a servant and gave orders that the body of the suicide should be consigned to the deep at once, without the knowledge of the sister or any one else, save those allotted to the task.

Then the captain sat down before a glowing fire, and began to think over his situation.

"So Langshan is after me," he muttered, between his clinched teeth. "Well, how he ever found where I was, I know not—nor do I care. One thing I do know—he will never give me up, even if he finds that his wife is dead. He is bound to the Pole, too, the young fellow said. Well, he is very likely to reach it with that invention of his, but not much sooner than I, I'll wager.

He must not think that I depend upon the *Invincible* alone to reach the North Pole."

For the first time since the exciting chase began, the man laughed.

For three days the *Invincible* kept picking her way through the ice, going farther north all the while.

She was now in the locality where Dr. Kane had passed his winter quarters, and, as it was utterly impossible to proceed farther, on account of the vast quantity of pack ice, Captain Sylvester gave orders to haul the vessel into a safe place and prepare to harbor her there for an indefinite period.

As soon as the ship was snugly housed behind an adjacent cliff on the shores of Northern Greenland, Captain Sylvester went right at work to proceed on his journey to the North Pole.

Under his supervision, a long, dark-looking object, resembling a monster canoe, was brought out of the *Invincible's* hold.

This was housed over from stem to stern, and appeared to be very light in weight.

As soon as this was on deck, a supply of provisions, weapons, instruments, etc., was placed inside, after which two empty silken bags were attached to the peculiar vessel.

These had various ropes and slender cords running to the inside of the little cabin, showing that they must have something to do with the motive power or guiding of the craft.

Half an hour after the curious craft was brought out upon the deck six people entered it.

They were Captain Sylvester, Enid Strathmore, Verna, the French maid who attended her, the ship's doctor, the second mate and a seaman.

Then, as regularly as any clockwork, the mysterious craft was lowered over the *Invincible's* side, by means of a tackle rigged for the purpose.

It had scarcely alighted upon the ice, when the two silken bags began swelling in an alarming manner.

In less than ten minutes they had assumed the shape and proportions of monster balloons, and had already lifted the craft to which they were attached several feet from the ice.

Then a huge wheel, in the shape of a windmill, unfolded at the stern, and began to revolve with lightning-like rapidity.

A strong wind was blowing almost directly from the south, and away flew the wonderful air ship, with the speed of a railway train.

As luck would have it, the wind continued favorable, and on the very day, though twelve hours later, the *Electric Traveler* entered the mysterious city of the North Pole, the air ship came in sight of the tall mountain peak, which Captain Sylvester set down for the central point of the Pole, after taking an observation.

As they passed over the strange city, which, as they could plainly see from their elevation, entirely surrounded the mountain, they saw that their advent was creating quite a stir.

The air ship was flying along about half a mile from the earth's surface, and Captain Sylvester was just congratulating himself that the inmates of the city would be unable to harm them, when he saw a sudden puff of white smoke below him, and the next instant a cannon ball whizzed through the air in close proximity to the air ship.

## CHAPTER X.

### A QUEER CITY.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Will Carding. "Miles Saybrook must have been here. There is the glorious flag of our nation!"

"Right yez are!" chimed in Danny Dagan. "That is ther flag of me adoption, begob!"

The professor, being an Englishman, did not become so enthusiastic over the flag as did the rest of the crew. Tom joined Will and the Irishman in cheering, and they made so much noise that the professor clapped his hands to his ears to shut it off.

Will promptly slowed down.

"I suppose we will stop here?" said he, looking at the professor.

"Yes; I guess there is no better place," was the reply.

Half a minute later they drew up in front of the building from which the flag floated and came to a halt.

The excited crowd kept at a respectable distance, so Will stepped out on deck.

The moment he did so, a shout came from the doorway of the building, and a man rushed out.

"Welcome!" he cried, in excellent English. "Welcome, whoever you are, to the land of the midnight sun!"

Thus encouraged, our hero leaped nimbly to the ground and grasped the man warmly by the hand.

"I am an American," said he, "and, when I saw the Stars and Stripes floating to the breeze, I could not go past it."

"I am glad you are an American," was the stranger's rejoinder. "I am half Yankee myself. But tell your friends to step upon the ground; they need fear nothing."

Already our hero's companions stood upon the deck of the *Traveler*, and, being reassured at the man's words, they promptly stepped down upon the ground.

"Who are you, anyhow?" asked the professor, as he shook hands.

"I am Miles Saybrook," was the reply.

"What!" gasped our friends. "Surely, you are not the man who discovered the Pole?"

"No, I am not. That was my father. But how came you aware of Miles Saybrook discovering the Pole? Did the man who carried his message reach civilization, then?"

"No, he did not," replied Will; "we found his body in the mouth of a tunnel many miles from here."

"Frozen, I presume?"

"Yes; and in a standing posture, too."

The man shook his head.

"That is the reason I never tried to reach the land of my father's birth," said he. "The climate is healthful and balmy here, but he always told me the regions of perpetual ice could never be crossed, on account of the piercing cold, unless it be by the aid of some power unknown to our people."

The crowd, which had been very timid before, now gathered around closer during the conversation.

"Step inside; this is the house of our king," said the man who called himself Miles Saybrook.

All started to obey, save Danny, who promptly clambered upon the deck of the *Traveler*.

"You need not fear to leave your wonderful conveyance unguarded," he hastened to assure them. "None of these people will lay so much as their fingers upon it."

"We have made a rule never to leave our vessel without one of our party in charge," rejoined the professor.

"Oh, very well; come in, then—the three of you."

Will led the way, and Tom and the professor followed.

As they brushed against the doorway, they saw that the buildings were not made of glass, as they had at first judged, but of some much softer material.

It was quite transparent, though; that is to say, where the material was thin it could be seen through readily enough.

It ranged from a light yellow to a deep saffron hue, and seemed to be very strong and durable.

When our three friends got inside the building, they were charmed at the beauty of its make-up.

There was but one apartment on the first floor, and this was in the form of a large hall filled with curiously-wrought chairs of the same material as the building was constructed.

In the farthest end of the hall was a sort of throne, inlaid with a species of mother-of-pearl of various colors.

Upon this sat a man, who, judging by his ancient appearance, must have been fully threescore years and ten.

Saybrook bowed low as he entered, and our friends promptly followed his example.

The king—for such was the elderly personage—seemed to be pleased at the salutation made by the strangers, for he arose and answered it in the same manner.

"So you are from the country whose flag we have adopted?" said he, in fair English. "Well, I am glad to meet you, friends—for friends I take you to be."

"Yes, we are friends," returned the professor. "We cannot express our surprise at finding such a wonderfully fine-looking city away up in this part of the world, but trust that we will be allowed to remain here long enough to learn all about it. I am aged, like yourself, but I expect to live to see the day when your land will be in open communication with the rest of the civilized globe."

The king was so well pleased with the remarks of the professor that he invited them to dine with him.

Of course, they accepted the invitation; but, as dinner would not be served for a couple of hours, they went about with Miles Saybrook, and learned many things concerning the city and its inhabitants.

The name of the people who inhabited it was the Meighlorfs; the city itself was called Slangon, and what it was built of, and the sole sustenance of its inhabitants came from the sea.

When the time came for our friends to dine with the king, they were led into a handsomely-furnished dining hall in the palace, which adjoined the huge building with the flag flying at its top.

The repast was an excellent one, though, to save their lives, they could not have told what they were eating.

They sat for nearly an hour at the table, and then Tom went aboard the *Traveler* and sent Danny in to get his dinner.

The Irishman went in ecstasies over the meal, and filled himself with the good things in much less time than did his companions.

From Miles Saybrook, Will learned that a broad roadway wound itself about the mountain until it finally reached the top of the peak, which, he said, was nothing but a crater with a sloping road leading down into the bowels of the earth.

When asked if any of the Meighlorfs had ever explored it, he shook his head.

"No," he said. "A horrible set of blood-thirsty savages live down there. Sometimes they come up out of the crater, and when they do, if any of our people are about, they are sure to be captured, and that is the last we ever see of them."

The next twelve hours were spent in resting and sleeping, and then our friends prepared to make a journey up the winding road to the mountain peak.

Just as they were about to start, they were startled by a wild shout from the Meighlorfs.

On looking up, they beheld the flying machine of Captain Sylvester soaring over the city.

Professor Langshan comprehended what it was almost instantly.

Before his companions knew what to make of it, he directed the muzzle of the swivel gun at it and fired.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE AIR SHIP IS WRECKED.

Boom!

As the report of the swivel gun rang out, the Meighlorfs fell flat on their faces from pure fright.

Our hero had his eyes fixed on the air ship the moment he saw what the professor was about to do.

A sigh of relief escaped his lips when he saw that the shot took no effect. He was thinking that perhaps the girl he had saved from the white bear was in the flying craft, and that was one reason why he did not want to see it hit and destroyed, as would most certainly be the case if the ball from the swivel gun had struck it.

Professor Langshan hastened to fire another shot, but before he could do so the air ship was out of range.

The professor had been very much excited when he saw the air ship, but he now grew more calm.

"It is my enemy," he said, "and he has reached the central point of the Pole before us."

"That peak is, indeed, the veritable North Pole," spoke up Miles Saybrook. "My father discovered that years ago. He also said that he believed he could make a journey to the center of the earth by way of the crater."

"Tell your people to rise; I shan't fire the cannon again very soon," remarked the professor, after a pause.

By this time the air ship had alighted on the opposite side of the peak, and was beyond the range of their vision.

"Boys, I think we had better go up the mountain by way of the winding roadway,"

It was the inventor of the *Electric Traveler* who spoke.

Out of courtesy, Miles Saybrook was invited to accompany them on their trip up the mountain.

After a slight hesitation, he accepted the invitation, and then all hands boarded the *Traveler*.

Tom took the wheel, and, with Saybrook at his side to point out the route, they started.

When probably half the distance to the peak had been made, Will discovered the air ship.

It was lying on a sort of natural platform of rock, just below the edge of the crater.

The balloons, which were not half inflated, lay over near the ground, lazily striving to free themselves, it seemed.

Almost the very instant they came in sight of it, three rifle shots rang out in rapid succession, and the bullets flattened against the steel netting that surrounded the *Traveler's* deck.

At a command from the professor, Will stopped the vessel still in her tracks.

The curling smoke from the rifles that had fired the shots told our friends that those who were shooting at them were concealed behind a pile of rocks, a few feet to the left of the air ship.

"They have abandoned the flying machine, and mean to fight it out with us on the solid ground, I guess," remarked Tom.

A smile that was almost satanic illumined the face of the professor for a single instant.

Then, with a coolness that was really startling, he seized the levers that controlled the pivot gun and directed its muzzle at the air ship.

Boom! As the report rang out, the rear portion of the car

was shattered into fragments, and one of the balloons, becoming liberated, sailed slowly away from the spot.

Boom! This shot finished it, for up went the other half-inflated balloon, leaving naught but a complete wreck beneath it.

Miles Saybrook said nothing, but looked on in a half-frightened manner.

The man lived in a country where strife was entirely unknown, save when the savage beings came from the crater of the mountain and attacked his people occasionally.

Our friends could see nothing of those who had been in the air ship until the *Traveler* had made a complete circuit of the peak.

This brought them about two hundred yards higher up, and they were now within fifty feet of the edge of the crater.

As they came to a halt for a moment, a scream for help rang out, and our hero perceived the form of Enid Strathmore spring from behind a rock and rush toward them.

He sprang to the door of the cabin and ran out on deck to meet her.

But, just as he did so, Captain Sylvester bounded forward and seized her about the waist and bore her out of sight again.

"Help—help!" came from the girl's lips, and then a muffled shriek was heard, and all was still.

"We must rescue that girl!" exclaimed Will, with flashing eyes. "Professor, I believe that Captain Sylvester is all that you say he is."

## CHAPTER XII.

### AN UNDERGROUND CHASE.

In the twinkling of an eye, our hero had taken his position at the keyboard which governed the battery, and the *Traveler* forged swiftly up the winding roadway.

In less than five minutes they were at the edge of the crater.

But not a sign of Captain Sylvester or any of his party could be seen.

Suddenly our friends were startled by hearing a volley of shots, coming, it seemed, from a point beneath their very feet.

Looking down into the crater, they beheld a natural circular roadway, leading downward in the direction of the earth's bowels, in the form of a huge winding stairs.

"Rather than face me, Captain Sylvester has retreated underground!" exclaimed Professor Langshan.

"Yes; and his party must have been attacked by the savage people who live down there," added Miles Saybrook.

"You are right," put in Will, "or else why would the shooting be?"

"I think the *Traveler* can go down there very easily," said Tom Hartley, in a suggestive manner.

"Of course she can!" echoed the professor. "We will start at once."

The crater of the open peak was fully three hundred yards in diameter, and the winding roadway that apparently led to the very center of the earth was not so steep but that the *Traveler* could descend, and come back again, easy enough.

The prow of the wonderful craft that could travel by land or water was directed to the place where the roadway began, and the next minute they were making a gradual descent.

They had proceeded downward for perhaps four or five hundred feet when they again heard the cracking of firearms.

It was no use looking down the crater to see anything. All was Stygian darkness there. In fact, they were but going around and around what might be called a monster well, every revolu-

tion bringing them about fifty yards lower toward the earth's center.

As it was now quite dark where they were, Will turned on the electric light.

This lighted up the scene as by the noonday sun.

It was at that moment that a startling scene came before the eyes of our friends. They beheld the party of Captain Sylvester struggling in a hand-to-hand conflict with a horde of fiendish-looking savages.

The underground dwellers were rather curious in appearance.

Their skin was of a sickly yellow hue, and the long hair they wore resembled dry grass more than anything else.

The only garments they wore were short skirts tied about their waists with a vine-like cord, and their weapons consisted solely of clubs, and axes made of stone.

As the eyes of our hero lit upon the scene, he contemplated that Enid Strathmore was in great peril, and that she must be saved. Running the *Traveler* into the very midst of the excited mob, he stopped her, and then led the way on deck.

Crack! crack! crack!

Our friends opened fire upon the underground dwellers, and began mowing them down like ripe grain before the scythe.

Will kept his eyes fixed upon the kidnaped girl, watching for an opportunity to spring from the deck and rescue her.

Suddenly he saw one of the savages knock Captain Sylvester down with a club, and then seize the girl and lift her in his arms.

The next moment he started swiftly from the spot, carrying his prize with him.

Will waited no longer.

"Come!" he shouted, leaping to the ground. "We must save the girl!"

Professor Langshan and Tom followed his example; but the professor did not start after the fiend who was fleeing with Enid Strathmore, as did the two boys, but hastened to the spot where his old enemy lay, stunned by the blow he had received.

Meanwhile, the savages must have had enough of it for the present, for they promptly left the scene of the scrimmage and hastened down the descent after their companion who carried the girl.

With a burning desire to rescue the fair prisoner, Will hastened after them with all his might, Tom following closely at his heels.

Some of the fleeing underground dwellers carried flaming torches, and this lighted the way.

That Enid Strathmore still retained her senses was plainly evident, for her cries for help could be heard every moment.

Crack! crack! crack!

Will and Tom kept blazing away with their rifles at every opportunity, and at almost every shot one of the horrible demons fell to rise no more.

For five minutes the exciting chase was kept up, and then, for the first time, our hero began to realize that they had been very foolish in pursuing the savages on foot.

If they had kept on board the *Traveler*, they would have had more of a chance in running them down and gaining possession of the girl.

This fact no sooner dawned upon the mind of Will than he heard the noise of firearms being discharged behind them.

Then the swivel gun of the *Traveler* boomed forth, making a thousand echoes in the underground place.

"Great God!" gasped our hero, coming to an abrupt halt. "Those whom we left behind are in some sort of trouble!"

"Yes," returned his companion, his face turning pale; "we must hasten back to their assistance!"

"And leave that poor girl to her fate?"

"We will go after her later on."

Will hesitated no longer.

"Yes," said he, "we will board the *Traveler* and chase them till we rescue her, even if we have to follow them to the very center of the earth!"

The next moment the two boys were running up the ascent with all their might.

When about half the distance back to the spot where they had left the *Traveler*, they detected a low, rumbling sound.

They knew what it was in an instant.

The noise was made by the wheels of their wonderful invention.

"The professor is hastening after us!" cried Tom. "Ah! here comes the *Traveler*; see the electric light shining?"

Whizz! whirr! bump! bump!

Surely, she was approaching!

The next moment the wonderful vessel burst into view, and they could see that she was running at full speed.

Will and Tom rushed forward into the glare of the rapidly-approaching electric light, and waved their arms wildly.

To their astonishment, the only reply they received was a couple of rifle shots.

As one of the bullets clipped a lock of hair from our hero's head, they drew back from the track of the *Traveler*.

The next moment she dashed by them, and a cry of dismay left their lips.

Captain Sylvester was seated at the keyboard that governed the vessel's motor!

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### HOW ENID STRATHMORE FARED.

As soon as Captain Sylvester saw the *Traveler* coming up the mountainside he made up his mind that he had to fight for it.

His enemy's invention was so near him when he first saw it that he felt that it would be foolhardiness to rise in the air and leave the spot.

Therefore he seized Enid Strathmore and sprang from the air ship, followed by his companions.

When he saw his air ship destroyed before his very eyes the rage of Captain Sylvester knew no bounds.

But when he saw how well the professor was protected from the leaden missiles fired at him, a dreadful fear took possession of him.

Then, seeing but one alternative before him, Sylvester gave the command to retreat down the crater.

The three men he had with him did not seem to relish the business very well, but they now felt that their lives were at stake, and obeyed willingly enough.

At first they thought it would be impossible for the *Traveler* to follow them into the crater, but when they saw the broad roadway they were doomed to disappointment.

"Our only chance is to reach a place where that devilish craft cannot follow us!" exclaimed Captain Sylvester. "Then, if those inside her attempt to attack us hand to hand, we will be on an equal footing with them, and will stand a good show."

Down the winding way they went, as fast as they could, hampered as they were with Enid and her maid.

When five minutes had slipped by, and hearing no signs of pursuit as yet, they began to feel a little easier.

But this feeling was one that was decidedly short-lived.

There was a wild, savage yell, and the next moment they were surrounded by about fifty of the horrible-looking underground dwellers.

Before they could recover from their fright and consternation, Verna, the French maid, was seized and borne away from their midst.

Then the savages attacked the party with their clubs and axes, and began driving them down the roadway.

Their foes were in such overwhelming numbers that, though they fired volley after volley into their ranks, they were forced steadily to retreat.

Thus it kept on till the *Electric Traveler* appeared on the scene, and it was just then when Enid was seized and borne away after her maid, and Captain Sylvester was stricken down by a club in the hands of one of the savages.

Enid was almost frightened out of her wits, but she managed to retain her senses, even when she was seized by the powerful underground dweller.

Shriek after shriek came from the girl's lips as she was borne along, and the only reason that she did not faint outright was that she kept hearing the sound of rifle shots close in her rear.

But these at length died out altogether, and then, feeling that she was certainly lost, the poor girl swooned.

How long she remained unconscious she never knew, but when she opened her eyes the first thing she noticed was that she was surrounded by a sort of dim, purplish light, and the next thing she became aware of was that she was lying upon a drag that was being rapidly drawn forward.

It took Enid at least half a minute to recollect what had transpired, and, as soon as she did so, she struggled to a sitting posture with a shudder.

Then it was that she saw that she was not the only person who was on the drag.

By her side lay Verna, the French girl, and directly in front of her sat an ugly-looking savage, with a bloody ax lying across his knees.

He made a motion for the girl to lie down again, which she promptly did, getting close to her maid.

On, on, went the drag, no longer down a winding road, but down a steep descent, which appeared like the side of a vast hill.

The purplish light that pervaded the air—it seemed to be extraordinarily pure air, at that—was something remarkable, as there was nothing to show where it came from.

It kept growing brighter as the drag continued on its journey down the hill, and when an hour had passed the captive girls could have read a book with ease, had they possessed one and felt so disposed.

But it still retained its purple hue, and, not being accustomed to it, the girls were forced to keep their eyes shut the greater part of the time.

For five more hours the drag kept on its way, without once coming to a stop, and Enid was forced to wonder at the tireless energy of the savages who drew it along.

But at length it came to a stop, and Enid found that the foot of the vast hill had at last been reached.

They had now arrived at a spot that was almost perfectly level, and, to the utter astonishment of the two captives, they beheld a broad sheet of water lying before them.

Soon after this the captives were conducted to the edge of the water, where were a number of light canoes.

Into one of these they were placed, and then, leaving the drag on the shore, all the underground people embarked and began paddling over the smooth surface.

The girls fell into a sound slumber shortly after they were placed in the canoe.

When they awoke they found themselves being lifted from the

canoe, and Enid promptly made signs that she would like to be set upon her feet, and not carried.

She was understood at once, and both were deposited gently upon the ground.

When the two captives became accustomed to the strange light which, by the way, still pervaded the place, they forgot all about their peril, and gave exclamations of wonder and delight.

And no wonder! Before them was the most beautiful sight ever witnessed by any civilized being.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### THE TRAVELER IS CAPTURED.

When Professor Langshan followed Will and Tom from the *Traveler*, and rushed toward the prostrate form of Captain Sylvester, there was an exultant expression in the old man's eyes.

Captain Sylvester opened his eyes just as the professor bent over him, with a cocked revolver in his hand.

The face of the prostrate man turned the color of ashes; but, in a voice that showed no signs of fear, he said:

"Well, you have found me at last! If you are going to kill me, do it at once, and that will be an ending of it!"

"Where is my wife?" demanded the professor, thrusting the muzzle of his revolver dangerously near his enemy's face.

"Where is your wife?" echoed Captain Sylvester, in a low, measured tone. "I'll tell you, professor. She is dead!"

Something like a wail came from the lips of Professor Langshan, and, taking an involuntary step backward, he pressed his hands to his brow in an agonized manner.

It was Captain Sylvester's turn now.

As quick as a flash, he sprang to his feet, and seized his enemy by the throat. Then, in a loud voice, he called his men, who had secreted themselves in an adjacent niche at the approach of the *Traveler*.

None of his three followers were badly wounded from their encounter with the savages, and they promptly hastened to the side of their captive.

In an exceedingly short space of time, Professor Langshan was disarmed and securely bound, and Danny Dagan sat in the pilot house window, afraid to fire upon the men for fear of hitting the professor.

"Now, then," observed Sylvester, in a sardonic tone, "you destroyed my air ship, so I will take possession of your invention."

Holding his captive in front of him, to shield his body, he started for the *Traveler*, his three accomplices following him closely in single file.

It was at this moment that the Irishman discharged the swivel gun to alarm Will and Tom of what was taking place.

The echoes made by the report of the cannon had scarcely died out when Captain Sylvester reached the side of the *Traveler*.

Miles Saybrook was so badly frightened at what was taking place that he was of no more assistance to Danny Dagan than a two-year-old child would have been; and the Irishman himself seemed to be rendered powerless to act for the time being.

Taking advantage of the attitude of the Irishman, Sylvester's mate, who was a rough, powerful-looking man, leveled his rifle at him, and commanded him to throw up his hands.

One of the other men treated Saybrook in a like manner, and then, throwing the bound form of the professor upon the deck, Captain Sylvester clambered on board, and relieved Danny of his weapons, and then forced him to enter the pilot house.

The villain's men followed him aboard the *Traveler*, highly elated at what had happened.

Captain Sylvester then took a seat at the keyboard of the electric battery, and, as luck would have it, discovered the *modus operandi* of the *Traveler* almost immediately.

The mate, whose name, by the way, was Jackson, took his station at the wheel, and they started her slowly ahead.

Sylvester kept the *Traveler* going at a much swifter pace than our friends would have done, but he desired to overtake the savages and wrest the two girls from their clutches, and did not hesitate to let her go, so long as he could see that the way was clear.

Sylvester kept a good lookout ahead.

When the *Traveler* had covered perhaps five miles, the winding roadway was left behind, and a graceful descent of unlimited width came before them.

It was here that the purplish tint of light first became apparent.

"The road is easy enough now," said Captain Sylvester. "We will go down this hill with just the brakes on a trifle. We must be very close to the savages now, and in less than an hour I'll guarantee that we have the two girls in our possession."

The next moment they were moving swiftly down the descent.

The farther they got down, the lighter it became, and presently Sylvester turned off the electric light.

In doing this, his arm pressed a lever accidentally, and the next moment the *Traveler* came to a sudden standstill with such a shock that it threw the villains off their feet.

A strange, whirring noise came to their ears, and she rolled over on her side, with a thud.

#### CHAPTER XV.

##### FOLLOWING THE TRAIL.

Will Carding and Tom Hartley were completely dumfounded as they saw the *Traveler* go flitting by, with Captain Sylvester and his rascally companions inside the cabin house.

During the short glimpse they got of her, they saw all four of the villains, but could see nothing of their three companions, whom they had left behind when they started on their mad chase after the underground dwellers.

"They must have got the best of the professor and Danny, and have most likely slain them," said Tom, with a dismal shake of his head.

"Let us hope they are not dead," returned Will. "Come! let us go back to the scene of the conflict."

With heavy hearts, the boys trudged up the winding ascent.

As it was uphill, it took them some time to reach the spot where they had left the *Traveler*.

But when they at length arrived there, they found no signs of their companions, as the reader may well understand.

"There is only one thing left for us to do now," said our hero. "They have, no doubt, taken the professor and Danny prisoners. We must start at once and try and overtake the *Traveler*."

Without another word, the two boys started, determined not to give up the task they had assigned themselves.

Going continually down hill may be much easier work than clambering upward, but it is tiresome work, just the same, and at the end of an hour the boys were perspiring from every pore.

The only thing they had to light them on their way was a torch Tom picked up near the scene of the fight between Captain Sylvester's men and the savages, and this now threatened to go out at any moment.

"We must keep on!" exclaimed Will, resolutely. "In fifteen minutes more, at the most, the torch will go out, and then we will be in total darkness."

Again they started forward.

True to our hero's expectations, the torch went out in fifteen minutes.

As it did so, both were astonished to see a faint light far ahead of them.

Full of wonder, they pressed on.

In five minutes more they stood at the top of the vast hill in the dim, purple light.

The air they now breathed seemed purer than any they had encountered since descending into the crater, and this astonished them not a little.

They were unable to see over twenty yards ahead of them, but both concluded that if they proceeded further downward it would grow lighter.

"Come!" said Will. "We must find the *Traveler*."

Down the hill they started, and, as they expected, the light gradually became stronger.

In half an hour's time they struck a trail, and though they hardly recognized it as having been made by the wheels of the *Traveler*, they concluded to follow it, nevertheless.

On they kept for hours, until at length, tired and weary, they reached the body of water upon which the savages had embarked with the two girls.

As they neared the water's edge they discovered innumerable footprints in the sand, and with a hopeful feeling they began to search about.

Suddenly Will uttered a joyous cry.

"Here is a canoe!" he shouted.

Tom hastened to his side and, sure enough, there was a canoe lying on the beach.

"Well, what shall we do now?" questioned our hero, wearily, when they had examined the little boat and found it seaworthy.

"Do? Why, put out on the water at once and try and find the *Traveler* and the girl we are hunting for."

"But this is a big body of water—how big we do not know. See! you can see no sign of any land over there; and, besides, we do not know whether the *Traveler* took to the water or not. I would suggest that we search the shore and see if we can see the tracks made by her wheels."

"You are right," returned Tom. "We'll start at once."

"I tell you what we had better do," said Will, thoughtfully.

"What?"

"Each take a different direction and walk along the shore of a space of ten minutes. If either of us come across the *Traveler's* wheel tracks we will shoot off our rifle."

"Agreed!"

Separating, the two plucky boys began skirting the water's edge in opposite directions.

The allotted time of ten minutes agreed upon by the two boys had just about elapsed when Will was startled by hearing a rifle-shot.

"Ah!" he exclaimed; "Tom has discovered something."

The next instant he had turned and was hurrying back to the starting point.

When he arrived there he saw no signs of Tom, and so he fired two shots to let him know that he was coming, and then proceeded to follow the foot-marks made by his companion.

Tom's trail was plain enough, and full of expectancy he hurried forward.

When about five minutes passed he was surprised to hear a number of rifle shots ring out in quick succession.

Will's face turned pale.

"Tom must certainly have come upon the *Traveler*," he thought. "He has got into trouble, too, it seems. Well, here goes to help him."

The boy broke into a sharp run, and two minutes later he came upon a rather startling scene.

Just at the water's edge, a few yards distant, he beheld the *Traveler*, and upon her deck, engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict with three men, was Tom Hartley.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE HOME OF THE UNDERGROUND DWELLERS.

The sight that met the eyes of Enid Strathmore and her maid was truly a grand, not to say startling, one.

They were gazing upon a vast area of the most beautiful vegetation mortal eyes had ever looked upon.

Towering trees and luxuriant shrubbery could be seen on every hand, and such flowers! The sight and perfume of them nearly took the girls' breath away.

All the leaves upon the trees and shrubs were of a bright straw color, and the flowers bloomed in almost any hue imaginable.

To add to the beauty of the scene, birds of the most brilliant plumage sang and sported in the trees.

When Enid had sufficiently studied the wonderful landscape before her, she looked above the treetops to see what lay beyond.

But nothing but a misty haze could she see, through which came occasional streaks of pink and violet rays of light.

The whole scene was so unique and beautiful that it was several minutes before the captives could comprehend that they were not dreaming.

But they were suddenly called to their senses by being grasped by the shoulders by their captors and marched forward.

The underground dwellers were now leading the way over a broad path through the forest.

As they walked along numerous queer-looking animals of all sizes darted across their path, making the welkin ring with their squeals and curious noises.

The girls noticed that many of the trees contained luscious-looking fruit, some of which made them hungry to look at.

After a while one of the savages plucked some of the fruit and tendered it to them.

They tasted it at first, and then ate it in a hearty manner, for it was the most delicious they had ever eaten.

They could not understand the jabbering of their captors, nor could they make themselves understood, save, perhaps once in a great while by a pantomime.

In a little over half an hour they suddenly emerged from the forest and saw a good-sized village of small, hut-like houses.

There were perhaps a hundred of them in a bunch, and they were surrounded by a level tract of land rich in agricultural products.

As soon as the savages came in sight of the village they set up a weird sort of chant, and kept it up till they halted in a wide, open square in the center of the collection of huts.

Then, at least three hundred people of all ages and both sexes gathered around them and sang a chant of welcome.

When this was over the captives were turned over to the care of two women, who promptly conducted them to one of the largest of the huts.

The room they entered was very clean, but was badly lacking in furniture, as beyond half a dozen soft rugs lying on the floor it contained nothing.

The women pointed to the rugs and motioned the girls to take a seat.

"We may as well sit down," said Enid, addressing her companion. "I am very tired and know you must be."

As she spoke one of the women gave a violent start and looked at her in surprise.

"What is the matter?" asked Enid. "Can you speak my language?"

"I can—a little," was the reply.

"Oh, I am so glad of that," and Enid rushed to her side with tears of joy in her eyes. "Will you tell us why we have been brought here, and what is to be done with us?"

"Sit down and be calm, and I will talk to you the best I know how," returned the woman in a peculiar broken dialect that was half English and half—Enid knew not what.

The girls promptly obeyed, and then taking a seat before them the woman related the following:

"My name is Mervura; I am not a native of this place, but was born in the city of Slangon, on the outside of the earth where the Meighlorfs reside. I learned what I know of your language there, as some of your people came to live in that place long ago, and introduced it.

"I was captured by these people about two years ago and brought down the hollow mountain, and thence here.

"I have never been harmed since I have been here, although I am not allowed to leave this place.

"The people of this place are called the Peils, and they are fearful that the time is approaching when their race will become extinct. That is the reason they capture all they can from other lands and bring them here.

"Every one who is brought here is allotted two years to willingly marry one of the Peils, and if they are not willing at the end of that time they are forced to do it. As I said before, I have been here two years, and to-morrow I marry one of the Peil chiefs of my own free will, for I know I will never get away from here and go back to my land, where the yellow sun shines in the sky almost perpetually, and where the salt waves beat upon the beach of the rock-bound island, which your people claim to be one of the two extremities of the earth.

"I have learned to be happy here, as most all of those who have been brought here have done, and I hope that you, though belonging to a much superior race than I do, will soon become contented with your lot."

"Never!" returned Enid, spiritedly. "We will not stay here, you may depend upon that."

"How will you get away?" asked the woman, in surprise.

"Some of our own people are even now coming after us. They are powerful, and will slay every man in this village but what they will rescue us."

The woman, who called herself Mervura, shook her head.

"It may be as you say," said she.

"But you do not think it will," added Enid.

"No, I do not."

"We will see."

"I am sure I shouldn't try and keep you here," said Mervura. "You may depend upon it that if your friends come after you I shall not attempt to hold you, even if I could; but, on the contrary, might assist you to get away. As for myself I shall remain here as long as I live."

Though the woman's story had enlightened the captives a great deal, it had not encouraged them much, beyond the fact that they would not be bothered much for a period of two years; and when they thought over this part of it they did feel a trifle easier.

"I will go now," said Mervura, rising to her feet. "You must be tired; lie down and sleep."

She had scarcely disappeared when the distant boom of a cannon was heard.

With a shout of joy Enid sprang to her feet.

"My friends are close at hand now!" she cried. "We will leave this place sooner than you expect, my good Mervura!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE PROFESSOR GOES CRAZY.

Will Carding could scarcely believe his senses when he saw the startling situation Tom was in, but he was not surprised to such an extent that he failed to recognize the fact that his friend needed assistance.

One of the men gripped Tom by the throat and was endeavoring to get an opportunity to thrust a knife in his breast.

The instant our hero saw this his rifle flew to his shoulder.

Taking a quick, decisive aim, he pulled the trigger.

As the report rang out Tom's opponent released his hold upon him and fell to the deck in a heap.

With the one thought of regaining possession of the *Traveler* in his mind, Will sprang forward with the speed of the wind.

Reaching the deck, he clambered upon it in the twinkling of an eye.

Captain Sylvester met him as he arose to his feet, with a leveled revolver.

"Stop where you are, young man!"

Sylvester spoke in an excited manner, and thrust forth his weapon meaningly.

But naught save death itself could stop our hero in his determination.

Without bantering any words with Sylvester, or noticing the leveled revolver in the least, he made a sudden duck and dove through his legs, throwing the man headlong to the deck.

Will did not stop to see what the rest of those on the deck were doing; he was bent on placing the captain in a position where he would be perfectly harmless.

Sylvester was down upon the deck, but having no other course to pursue, the boy struck him a smart crack on the head with the butt of his revolver.

This served to render him unconscious, and becoming quickly aware of this, Will turned to further assist Tom in regaining possession of the *Traveler*.

But what was his surprise when he saw Professor Langshan and Tom standing before him.

Before he could give utterance to his thoughts, Danny Dagan and Miles Saybrook emerged from the cabin.

"Why, what——" stammered our hero.

"Never mind what," interposed Tom. "You shot the fellow who was about to kill me, and then I rushed into the cabin and freed the prisoners before a hand could stop me. The result is that the two men that comprise Captain Sylvester's crew, who are still living, are bound hand and foot, and at our mercy."

"And I guess I settled the captain for a short time, anyhow," added Will.

"We'll tie him up to make sure of it, begob!" exclaimed Danny, suiting the action to the words.

When Captain Sylvester opened his eyes a couple of minutes later he found that the tables had been very neatly turned upon him. He had very cleverly captured the *Traveler*, but had lost her again.

The professor told what had happened in a few words. When

the *Traveler* upset it was because Sylvester had unthinkingly moved the lever that caused her wheels to rise up and take their places in the hidden receptacles made for them.

This, of course, caused no little consternation, but the captain soon comprehended what had taken place, and in a very short space of time swung back the lever again.

Of course, the *Traveler* immediately righted herself, and with a sigh of relief Captain Sylvester soon had her moving down hill the same as before the accident.

When they at length came to the lake the bold villain, though well versed in machinery of all sorts, concluded to make a thorough examination of the *Traveler's* motor before taking to the water.

It was over an hour before he found out the mysteries of the delicate machinery, and just as he had solved the problem, he heard a rifle shot close at hand, and the next instant Tom Hartley sprang upon the deck.

What followed has been told, and now that they had succeeded in their undertaking beyond their most sanguine expectations, Will and Tom shook hands.

Of course there was a hearty handshake all around after this, and then it was deemed advisable to hold a consultation to see what should be their next move.

"The first thing to do is to dispose of our prisoners," said the professor.

"What do you mean to do with them?" asked our hero.

"I care not what is done with two of them," was the reply; "the other I want to see executed."

"Captain Sylvester, you mean?"

"Exactly."

"Well, he shall not be executed—at least, not right away. The prisoners are under the charge of Tom and myself; we took them, you must admit, and I think we should have first say in regard to their disposal."

The professor's face darkened.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "I believe that I am the head man of this expedition."

"Yes," returned our hero, "but when we enlisted our services with you was it not with the understanding that we were not to engage or assist in anything unlawful? Now you want us to assist you in killing a man, just because he is your sworn enemy. I have already the blood of one of his followers on my hand, and I am sorry for it; but I had to shoot him to save Tom's life. We will hold the three prisoners for a few days, and in that time we will determine what is to be done with them."

"Brave, Will!" exclaimed Tom; "you have expressed my sentiments, exactly."

"An' mine, too, begob!" put in the Irishman.

"I think there is wisdom in the words of the young man," added Miles Saybrook, mildly.

"All right," returned the professor, with an air that was slightly crestfallen, "it shall be as you say; but I trust you will be willing for me to ask a few questions of the vile hound who broke up my happy home?"

"Certainly, professor," said Will. "You must remember that you are the commander and paymaster of this expedition. We shall not question any of your actions as long as you keep in the bounds of law and order. That was our agreement, you know."

Without making a reply the professor walked over to the spot where Captain Sylvester was lying.

"Wretch!" he demanded. "Did you kill my wife?"

"I did not," was the calm reply. "She committed suicide."

"Did she ever speak of me while she was with you?"

There was a softness in the professor's voice as he asked the question.

"She did not, unless it was to express her fear that you would some day overtake her and punish her for leaving you in the lurch."

A startling change came over the face of the professor.

Suddenly he uttered a loud guffaw, and began dancing about the deck in a manner that was truly after the style of an imbecile.

Suddenly he ceased his queer antics, and drawing a knife quickly, severed the bonds that held his enemy powerless to move.

"Come, Sylvester," said he with a broad grin on his face, "we'll go in and get a drink."

Full of wonder, our friends watched the extraordinary proceedings.

"The professor has gone crazy," said Will. "Just look at him! he resembles an idiot more than anything else."

And Captain Sylvester, as much mystified as any of the rest, allowed himself to be conducted into the cabin by the man who but a few minutes before was ready to kill him.

As soon as the pair reached the inside of the cabin the professor invited Sylvester to a seat and then produced a bottle of brandy and a couple of glasses.

"Well, that beats anything I ever saw!" observed Tom. "There is no use in trying to believe anything different. Professor Langshan is as crazy as a bedbug!"

And the boy was right. From a stern, determined old man with a burning desire for revenge upon the one who had wronged him, the professor had, in the twinkling of an eye, been transformed into a harmless, driveling idiot.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### TOO LATE!

A look of joy came over the face of Enid Strathmore when she heard the boom of a cannon in the distance.

That neither the woman, who called herself Mervura, nor her companion had ever heard such a heavy, concentrated noise before was plainly evident by the looks of fear and astonishment that shadowed their faces.

"We are saved!" exclaimed Enid, almost wildly. "The wonderful vessel that travels by land and sea is close at hand, and the brave young man who saved me from the white bear is surely on board of her!"

This the girl said to her maid, and Verna's face assumed an expression of the deepest satisfaction.

"Come!" exclaimed Enid. "I can wait no longer. We must go out and meet our friends. Probably we will see the woman, Mervura, outside."

What the girl said was law, so far as the maid was concerned, and, opening the door, they sallied forth.

The first thing the girls saw when they got outside was an immense crowd of the underground dwellers swarming to a point in the direction of the wooded country they had been brought through after leaving the lake.

Enid and Verna were about to follow in the wake of the excited populace, when the brazen notes of a number of horns were heard in the distance.

The girls came to an abrupt halt.

And no wonder! The noise made by the horns came from a direction exactly opposite to that where the cannon had boomed.

What could it mean?

This was the question Enid asked herself. She noticed that

the blasts from the horns seemed to terrify the strange people fully as much as the cannon reports had.

Even now they had come to a halt and were gesticulating and chattering wildly among themselves.

Full of wonder at the extraordinary state of affairs, the girls again started ahead.

Before they had traversed fifty yards Mervura rushed up to them, her face white as a sheet.

"We are attacked from both entrances to our country!" she exclaimed. "We will all be lost now!"

"What do you mean?" asked Enid. "Have some of my friends succeeded in getting around to the rear of this place, and are they marching upon us from both points?"

"Alas! no," was the reply. "It may be that it is your friends who made the thunder-like noise, but those who blow upon the horns are the mortal enemies of the Peils—they are demons, who live down in the very heart of the earth."

"If that is the case we had better hurry to meet our friends," returned Enid. "Come, Mervura, will you go with us?"

"I will," was the reply, "for nothing but death will overtake us if we fall in the clutches of the demons!"

Enid glanced about her and saw that the excited Peils were rushing about, arming themselves and preparing to meet the attack as best they knew how.

Suddenly the cannon boomed forth again, this time the sound being much nearer, and a cheer went up from the lips of Enid.

She had scarcely uttered it when the sound of approaching wheels could be heard.

"They come!—my friends come!" cried the girl.

"No—no!" almost shrieked Mervura. "It is not your friends who come; it is the demons in their chariots. See!"

The two girls turned, and the sight they saw rendered them spellbound with terror and amazement.

Approaching at a breakneck speed were over a score of heavy vehicles greatly resembling chariots of ancient days, each one drawn by four horses of the most mammoth proportions.

Each chariot, as we shall call them, contained at least forty men of medium stature, attired in curious short robes that glistened like gold and silver in the purplish light that prevailed.

In spite of the fact that Mervura had said the approaching men were demons, they looked far more civilized than did the Peils.

They were armed with spears and bows and arrows, and looked formidable enough.

The sight was such a grand and picturesque one that Enid and her maid, instead of fleeing, stood and gazed at it as still as statues, Mervura clinging to them in abject terror.

Straight to the center of the Peil village came the whirling chariots, the noise made by the horses being now quite deafening.

The Peils began hurling their axes and clubs at the men in the vehicles, and were answered by a volley of arrows, which did a great deal of execution.

It was at this stage of affairs that Enid came to her proper senses.

Common sense told her that if they hoped to escape they must flee at once.

Mervura heartily seconded the girl's action, though she was still too much terrified to speak.

They broke into a run, but no sooner had they done so when one of the chariots came swooping after them.

Faster ran the three, and faster came the heavy vehicle thundering after them.

But suddenly Enid gave a cry of joy.

A quarter of a mile ahead of them she beheld the *Traveler* speeding forward to meet them.

Standing on the deck she saw human forms attired in civilized dress, and she knew that once the wonderful invention reached them they would be saved.

But, alas! her fond hopes were rudely dashed aside.

The pursuing chariot was now within a few yards, and the next minute it drew up alongside of them.

Half a dozen of the shining-robed men sprang to the ground and seized the three frightened females.

Back into the chariot they clambered, and the powerful animals that drew the vehicle were turned hastily around.

And those upon the approaching *Traveler*, which was now but a short distance away, dare not fire the swivel-gun at the chariot for fear of killing the captives!

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A PAIR OF LUNATICS.

Will told Tom to sit in the cabin door and watch the crazed professor and Captain Sylvester, while he made an examination of the *Traveler* and her delicate machinery to see if she was ready to proceed.

Of course, Tom was perfectly willing to do this. He felt extremely sorry over the fact, of his employer having lost his mind, and then, again, he did not much like the idea of Sylvester being at liberty.

With Miles Saybrook at his side, he kept his eyes on the pair, who were seated at the table drinking large horns of brandy and chatting together in a nonsensical manner.

"Well, what do you think of the professor?" asked Tom, turning to his companion.

"He is what you people would call an incurable idiot," was the reply.

"How about the captain? It seems to me he acts different from what he did when he was cut free from his bonds."

"I am studying him from my position here. I forgot to tell you that I was a doctor in my land. I have made a special study of crazy people, and you mustn't be surprised if I tell you in a few minutes that the professor's companion is as crazy as he is."

"What do you mean?" asked Tom.

"Didn't you say just now that he acted rather strange?"

"I did; but it can't be possible that Sylvester, too, has lost his mind."

"You think not, eh? Well, just look at them."

As Tom glanced at the two men he could but think that Saybrook was right.

Sylvester and the professor were now grimacing and jabbering away like a pair of monkeys.

A few minutes later Will put in an appearance, after finding everything aboard the *Traveler* all right.

When he saw the pair seated at the table he was forced to believe that what Saybrook said was correct.

"Well," observed Will, after a pause, "one of these other prisoners might be a doctor. I don't doubt your word, Saybrook, but we will see what further evidence we can get that what you say is correct."

Walking over to the two prisoners, who had been listening to the entire conversation, Will said:

"Is either one of you fellows a doctor?"

"Yes, sir, I am the doctor belonging to the exploring ship *Invincible*," replied one of them.

"Well, suppose we let you go free—what then?"

"If you cut loose our bonds we will swear to stick by you and do just as you say."

"Yes, sir," put in the other man, "ther doctor says ther captain has gone mad, an' ther mate was shot dead a little while ago; an', as we were workin' under their orders, we are now out of a job. If you will let us work under you, we shan't ask a cent for our service, an' will do just as you say."

"I am going to run the risk, anyhow," returned our hero, without any hesitation. "Act like honest and truthful men, and you are welcome to remain aboard the *Traveler*; prove treacherous to us, and you will either be killed or abandoned in this unknown, underground country."

Drawing his knife, the boy liberated the prisoners.

Both thanked him warmly as they arose to their feet, and Will could see that a look of extreme sincerity shone from their eyes.

"Do you want me to examine the patients seated at the table?" asked the doctor. "I could but hear the conversation that has been passed about them, and I, myself, have been watching them keenly."

"Go ahead," replied our hero. "I am satisfied that the professor has gone clean daft, but, as to the other fellow, I don't know."

The doctor walked over to the two men, and in turn proceeded to ask them innumerable questions and otherwise examine them.

At the expiration of half an hour he turned to Will, and said:

"Both are hopeless lunatics; your friend, whom you call the professor, has no doubt lost his mind through some great disappointment, which he learned within the minute he became unbalanced, and Captain Sylvester has no doubt become a lunatic out of sheer fright. He expected to be killed every second when his enemy was bending over him, and when he was released and taken kindly by the hand instead, his mind gave way. I happen to know something of the differences between the two men, and that is why I give this plausible explanation of the affair."

"Is there any hope of either of them becoming sane again?" asked Tom.

"For Captain Sylvester, yes; for the professor, none."

"How can Captain Sylvester be cured?"

"By being sent to an insane asylum, where he can receive the best of care."

"His chances are pretty slim, then?"

"Yes; as it is not possible that he will be able to receive proper treatment for the malady in a long time; it is quite probable that his brain will become befuddled to such an extent that he will never regain his reason."

"Well, it shall have to be so, then, for if turning back now would restore the captain's reason, I would not do it. We have more important business on hand. A young lady has been captured by these underground inhabitants, and it is our duty to rescue her."

"Certainly," returned the doctor, hastily. "Rescue her by all means. But there are two girls, though—Enid Strathmore and her maid, Verna."

"I was not aware of that," said Will. "But, anyhow, we must set out and not give up till we find them."

As everything was in readiness, our hero concluded to enter the lake and strike a beeline across it.

Tom took his station at the wheel and away they started.

The brandy the two imbeciles had imbibed proved too much for their weak nerves, and before the *Traveler* had fairly got started they were sound asleep.

Will kept the vessel going at a rapid pace, and in about one-

third of the time it had taken the savages to cross in their canoes, they reached the other side.

As luck would have it, they at once struck the path over which the captives had been conveyed.

When about halfway through the forest Will fired the swivel-gun to let the captives know, if they were within hearing, that help was at hand.

On they kept, following the plain trail all the time until they came in sight of the strange scene described in the last chapter.

As soon as our friends saw the girls they gave a hurrah, and Will pushed the *Traveler* forward at a faster rate of speed.

But in a very few seconds a cry of dismay left their lips.

They beheld the monster chariot bearing down upon the girls.

Our hero saw that they were too late, and yet he dared not turn the cannon upon the chariot, for fear of hitting the girls and the strange woman who clung to them.

"We will pursue them until we catch them," said he, when they saw the captives lifted into the vehicle.

Whizz! whirr! Away sped the four horses with the chariot behind them, and after them came the *Traveler* at an increased speed.

By this time a terrible conflict was raging in the village, and before our friends were aware of it the *Traveler* was surrounded by a circle of the chariots.

It was then that Will deemed it advisable to bring the swivel-gun into play.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE ENEMY GETS THE BEST OF IT.

Our hero saw that they had no mean foe to contend with. The men who occupied the chariots seemed to be a brave, determined lot of fellows.

Though they were in the midst of a formidable-looking circle, not a move to attack them openly had been made.

"The moment they attempt to stay our progress through their lines I will fire the gun," said Will. "Enid Strathmore and her maid must be saved."

"Right you are!" echoed Tom.

"Begob! these people are after lookin' like them that play in the circus," observed Danny; while Captain Sylvester and the professor, who had awakened from their slumber, nodded and grinned, as though they were of the same opinion as the Irishman.

That the Peils were very much afraid of their foes was more than evident. After their first onslaught upon the chariots the majority of them retired to the seclusion of their huts.

And, strange to say, the invaders did not step down from their vehicles and follow them.

They seemed to be content with the fact of having put the Peils to rout, and they blew loud blasts upon the horns in a triumphant manner.

They knew not what sort of a contrivance the *Traveler* was, but instead of being frightened at her appearance, they seemed rather to enjoy her approach, for they were fully confident of besting her in a single round.

When they drew their chariots in a circle around the strange visitor the underground warriors expected those aboard would at once throw up the sponge.

But never was a lot of men more mistaken!

With the steel netting in position to shield them from the spears and arrows, the *Traveler* made straight for the chariot upon which the girl captives had been placed.

This movement was no sooner observed than those on the

right and left started to close in upon our friends, sending a shower of spears and arrows at the *Traveler* as they did so.

"It is about time we let them hear from us," said Tom.

"Yes," returned our hero. "I think we had better give them a volley from our rifle, and then, if they are determined to capture us, we will turn the gun upon them."

This being a good suggestion, our friends promptly sent half a dozen shots into the nearest of the chariots.

Of course, two or three men were killed, and this served to check the strange warriors and frighten them not a little.

But it was only temporary. That the gorgeously attired inhabitants of the center of the earth were an exceedingly warlike race was more than evident.

After a momentary halt they crouched below the sides of their vehicles, and once more began closing in upon the *Traveler*.

"There is no help for it!" exclaimed Will; "I hate to shed blood, but the swivel-gun must be turned upon them. Perhaps if we wreck one of those chariots and kill half of those in it we may be able to rescue the girls during the consternation that is bound to follow."

His companions nodded assent, and the next instant the gun was fired upon one of the chariots.

Boom! The thing was split almost completely in two, and its occupants were flung out and scattered upon the ground.

The gigantic horses were frightened beyond measure, and finding that no one held the reins that connected with their bits, they started with the speed of a hurricane, dragging the wrecked chariot behind them.

But the worst of it was that they were making directly for the *Traveler*!

Will started the vessel ahead to get out of their way, but he was too late.

Making a sudden swerve, the maddened animals collided with the rear portion of the wonderful invention with such force as to nearly upset it.

At the same instant the *Traveler* came to a standstill.

Will pressed the button to proceed. But the vessel remained motionless!

The boy's face turned pale.

"We are in for it now," he exclaimed. "The shock has broken something, and we will not be able to stir from this spot until I have overhauled the machinery and made the necessary repairs."

All save the professor and Captain Sylvester showed signs of great uneasiness at this.

The two in question nodded and grinned as though the whole proceeding was a great hoax for their special amusement.

Bidding Tom to keep a strict watch upon the chariot that contained the girls, Will set about to find out what was the matter.

The enemy must have surmised that there was something the matter, for while our hero was engaged in his work they swooped down upon the *Traveler* from all sides.

Tom tried to fire the swivel again, but found that it would not work.

There was nothing left to do but use the rifles, and they accordingly rushed out on deck.

Placing them through the loop-holes in the steel netting, they fired shot after shot into the advancing warriors.

But this did not check them to any great extent, and in spite of the gallant resistance made by our friends the *Traveler* was reached by the foe.

All expected that the curious race would clamber on deck and endeavor to kill them or make them prisoners.

But no such thing happened.

Instead of doing that, the charioteers produced some rope and tackle and made it fast to the prow of the *Traveler*.

Then half a dozen of the gigantic horses were hitched to it, and the next minute the disabled vessel began to move.

"Great Scott!" gasped our hero. "They are towing us away."

"Yes, and where to?" answered Tom.

"To their home down in the center of the earth, most likely," put in Miles Saybrook.

"I wish I had never come on this wild trip, begob!" cried Danny Dagan, in a voice that showed unmistakable signs of fear.

"It will take at least half an hour before I can repair the damage we have received," said Will, after a pause. "Several wires have become disconnected, and the main battery is knocked all out of shape. When I do get things in working order, I'll guarantee that these fellows will drop us like a hot potato. In the meantime, while I am at work, keep an eye on the chariot the girls are in, Tom."

"I see it now," was the reply. "It is the third one ahead of us."

The strange people had given up the idea of raiding the village of the Peils, and were now heading for their own country.

The capture of the girls and the wonderful wheeled thing, which ran without the aid of horses, evidently satisfied them.

Shortly after they left the confines of the Peils' country the way became decidedly down hill.

The heavy horses pulled the *Traveler* along easily enough, over the level ground, even, and when the way became down hill it was necessary for them to be rigged so they could hold it back. In fact, if Tom had not guided the vessel by her wheel it is doubtful but that there would have been some mishap to our friends, as it is more than likely she would have taken a side-wise course and capsized.

When the time Will had allotted to himself to repair the damage was up, they were traveling down a steep grade.

It was at this stage of affairs that the horses who were holding back their load became unmanageable.

Suddenly they made a vicious bolt and freed themselves from the *Traveler*.

The next instant the vessel started in an oblique direction down the hill.

Whizz—whirr! Away she went, and our friends in her cabin utterly powerless to stop her, as Will had not yet got her in working order.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE DESCENT THROUGH DARKNESS.

When Tom Hartley saw that the *Electric Traveler* was running away with them he had the presence of mind to throw the wheel around and strike a course that was out of the way of the chariots.

Away they sped, soon leaving the warriors who had captured them far in the rear.

When about two miles had been covered, Tom noticed that there was a sharp turn in the hill; but, as there were no obstacles in sight, he thought he could turn it with safety.

Just as the *Traveler* reached the bend Will Carding uttered a cry of joy, springing to his feet as he did so.

"I have repaired the damage," said he. "Now we are again ready to meet the men who have the girls."

He gently put on the brake, and the *Traveler* went around the curve at a slower pace.

Once around the turn the wide, natural roadway showed them that it led virtually in the direction they had come, only downward all the time.

Will and Tom now had perfect control of the *Traveler*, and they proceeded along at a speed that suited them.

"I think we had better halt in the first favorable spot, and wait for the chariots to overtake us," said Will.

"That's it, exactly," replied Tom. "But, for my part, I am afraid it will be hard to find a favorable spot. See how narrow this roadway is getting, and how steep it is."

"We will stop on the next corner and lay for the blackguards," spoke up the Irishman.

The professor and Captain Sylvester, who had, for the space of half an hour, been playing checkers, paid not the least attention to what was being said, but went on with their game in a childish, indifferent way.

Half an hour passed.

Will was just making up his mind to turn the *Traveler* and go back to meet their enemies, when the mouth of a dark passage loomed up ahead of them.

"Just the thing!" he cried. "We will go in there for a little way and then wait for the chariots to come along."

The next minute the prow of the *Traveler* entered the mouth of the passage.

When about half her length had entered the dark place, Will stopped her by putting on the brake.

Then a really startling thing occurred.

The bow shot downward until the vessel lay at an angle of forty-five degrees.

Our friends were thrown from their feet by the suddenness of the thing; and before they could rise they felt themselves descending rapidly.

"My God!" gasped our hero, "what has happened now? We are going downward like a meteor!"

He seized the lever that governed the brakes and put them on to the fullest extent.

But though this stopped the wheels from revolving, it did not check their speed in the least.

Whizz! whirr—whirr! Down—down, they went, the *Traveler* being in such a position that they had to brace themselves to keep from falling against the forward part of the cabin house.

The crazed couple, becoming frightened for the first time, began to cry like babies.

Will had turned on the electric light just as they entered the passage, and thus it was that the cabin was illumined.

It was no use to attempt to guide the *Traveler*, so they sat, or clung to their seats, waiting for the end to come.

On, on! mile after mile, their course still remaining at about the same angle, and their speed not increasing nor decreasing.

The fear which had fastened upon our hero and Tom, at the start of their most wonderful adventure, had gradually worn off, and they now clambered over the slanting floor of the cabin and righted things up as best they could.

Their action caused Danny Dagan to regain his composure, and he was soon assisting them.

Saybrook had crawled in one of the bunks and refused to come out, even when the boys almost commanded him to do so.

As for the two strangely-wrought idiots, they had cried themselves asleep, and, all unconscious of the danger that surrounded them, they snored away, side by side.

A sort of grinding, rushing noise had been heard from the first, and in order to make their words understood, the boys and the Irishman were compelled to shout to each other.

Ten minutes more slipped by.

The terrific descent was kept up.

"In my judgment we have traveled at least two hundred miles since we entered the dark passage," observed Will, in a matter-

of-fact way. "And that means that we have descended in the neighborhood of a hundred miles or over into the bowels of the earth."

"And allowing that we had descended one hundred and fifty miles before we entered the passage, makes us now about two hundred and fifty miles below the earth's surface," said Tom.

"It does," our hero replied, with a shrug of his shoulders. "We are all of that I firmly believe."

The words had scarcely left his lips when the noise suddenly ceased, and the next moment the *Traveler* pitched forward into a body of water with a loud splash!

## CHAPTER XXII.

### DOWN THE SWIFT STREAM.

As the *Traveler* struck the water Will Carding gave himself up for lost.

Like his companions, he was bumped about like a rubber ball for the space of two or three minutes, and then all became still.

The light from the electric lamp was still shining brightly, and our hero arose to his feet and looked out of the pilot house window.

As far as he could see he beheld naught but a mass of rushing water, and instinct told him that the vessel was being carried swiftly but silently along.

"Take the wheel, Tom," said he. "We are being carried along like a chip in a mill-race."

Tom promptly obeyed.

"Now," observed Will, "there is no use of thinking of such a thing as going back the way we came. Our only hope lies in going where this current takes us, and at length finding a new route to go back."

Will pushed the lever that controlled the wheels, and they returned to the receptacles made for them on deck.

With his eye fixed at the edge of the gloom ahead of them, Tom guided the *Traveler* as straight as an arrow.

Strange to say, Will was not much alarmed at their situation. Had the girl captives been wrested from the underground warriors and been aboard the *Traveler* with him, he would have felt comparatively easy.

As it was, the main thing that worried him was the dreadful position the girls were in.

On, on they were swept, the minutes rolling into hours, and still the same thing.

But all things must come to an end sooner or later, and this mysterious underground river was no exception to the rule.

After many hours the *Traveler* suddenly emerged into a broad sea of comparatively still water.

But that was not all; it was no longer dark, since the same purplish light that pervaded the atmosphere at the country of the Peils illumined this unknown place.

The change made our friends feel much better, and they uttered a faint hurrah.

On the left shore of the body of water they were floating upon could be seen a forest that resembled the one they had traversed before they entered the village of the Peils.

"We will go ashore there," said our hero. "In all probability we shall find human beings somewhere about. If we do we must endeavor to make friends with them and get them to show us the way to get back and rescue the girls from the hands of their captors."

"That is our only show, I am afraid," returned Tom.

Will now sent the *Traveler* for the shore at a good speed.

When they were within a hundred yards of it there was a faint splash in the water near them, and the next instant they observed a huge amphibious creature resembling a crocodile swimming toward them with wide open jaws.

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It is now necessary for us to turn our attention to Enid Strathmore and her maid.

Both girls were so badly frightened when they were seized and placed in the chariot that they fainted.

Mervura, who was also taken prisoner, was more used to that kind of work, and though she struggled to escape from her captors, she did not swoon.

She had often heard of the strange warriors who inhabited the central portion of the earth, but this was the first time they had entered the land of the Peils since she had been an inmate of it.

But when she heard the horns and saw the chariots, with their loads of men in the glistening gowns, she knew it was the Centros who were coming to destroy the village.

We say Centros, for such was the name the Peils called the race of men who rode in the chariots, although when speaking among themselves they dubbed them as demons.

Mervura knew that the country of the Centros was many days' journey from the village of the Peils, and that was the reason they so seldom visited them.

She had never heard of them taking prisoners before, as they had been content heretofore with destroying all the huts the village contained and then leaving with a loud clamor, as on entering the place.

But this time they had hardly destroyed a single hut, and then made off with three prisoners, two of whom were strangers.

When the two girls came to from their faint, Mervura quietly told them of their situation.

In spite of her gloomy words, Enid had hopes yet.

"We will be rescued yet," said she, stoutly. "The boat on wheels will get the best of these people before a great while, see if it don't!"

"I hope so," returned Mervura, sadly.

But that was all they did for many days—hope.

Their journey was a long and tedious one, and though the captives were fed and treated well, they grew thin and haggard from their worry and confinement.

Enid knew not how long they had been upon their downward journey, but one day, a long while after they were taken from the Peil village, they arrived at a country that was even more beautiful than the one they had already passed through.

They had no sooner reached there than the captives received a surprise that nearly took their breath away, and caused their eyes to sparkle in a hopeful manner.

And no wonder, for in the midst of a large cluster of good-sized houses they beheld the *Electric Traveler*!

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE JOURNEY CONTINUED.

The enormous creature that was making for the *Traveler* was such a horrible-looking thing that our friends turned pale when they saw it.

Its jaws were like those of a crocodile, only about four times as large, and its glistening teeth showed in a dangerous manner.

"Mercy!" gasped our hero. "If that fellow once grips our vessel in his monstrous jaws he will crush it like an egg-shell."

He turned on more power, hoping to reach the shore before the creature overtook them.

But it was now very close to them—coming in an oblique direction, as though it comprehended their intention of reaching the shore, and meant to cut them off.

Noticing this, Tom sent the wheel spinning around, and the *Traveler* turned quickly and made for the center of the underground sea.

The move was such a sudden one that the huge saurian was completely deceived, and before it could get its immense body around, the quick-moving vessel was a hundred yards away from it.

"Why not shoot ther beast with ther cannon?" asked the Irishman. "Begob! I believe he will be after killin' us all if we don't."

Strange to say, neither of the boys had thought of this before, and their faces lighted up instantly at Danny's suggestion.

Almost in the twinkling of an eye, Will had the muzzle of the swivel-gun directed at the huge, ugly-looking head of the monstrosity.

He touched a button, and the cannon was discharged with a loud report.

Then, for the space of a few seconds, the creature was enveloped in a mass of flying spray, while the beating of its massive tail upon the surface of the water made a noise that was truly deafening.

But this did not last long.

The swivel-gun had done its work, and in about a minute's time our friends beheld the horrible thing floating motionless on the surface of the water.

Will took a hasty glance at it and calculated that it must be at least eighty feet in length.

That was enough for him, and fearful that some more of the creatures might suddenly burst upon them, he gave orders to Tom to steer direct for the shore.

The next moment they were skimming through the water at all possible speed.

When within a few yards of the shore our hero shut off the motive power and dropped the wheels.

The impetus of the vessel carried her along till the wheels hit the bottom, and then, speed being put on again, she rolled along, and in a minute later was high and dry.

"Now," observed Tom, "which way?"

"That is hard to say," returned Will. "Suppose we examine the compass and see if we can't set our course by land and find those we are searching for?"

They had not looked at their compass since they had been under ground, for the simple reason that they had been following a natural roadway the greater part of the time. And now, as they gazed at the dial, it struck them that it had become broken in some manner.

The needle was going around with a slow, measured movement, and would not stop at any point!

"Very strange," said Will. "I never saw a compass act like that before. If the professor was only in his right mind now, he could explain it, no doubt."

"Yes," was Tom's reply. "But I think the thing is out of order. I saw Captain Sylvester have a small compass; let us examine his."

Sylvester gave the article in question up in about the same manner as a child would have parted with a toy; and the moment the boys glanced at its face they saw that it was acting the same as the one belonging to the *Traveler*.

"There is only one way to explain it," said our hero, after a rather lengthy pause.

"How is that?" asked Tom.

"We must be very near the center of attraction."

"You think so?"

"The action of the two compasses makes me think so."

"Then we are right down into the center of the earth,"

"We are."

A sort of shelving beach extended up from the water for perhaps two or three hundred yards, and beyond this was a vast tract of desolate-appearing country.

Overhead naught but a misty haze could be discerned, while the same mystic, purplish light prevailed.

It was with the greatest difficulty that Tom steered the *Traveler* over the rough, uneven ground.

When they had made perhaps five miles, the aspect of the country became suddenly changed.

Instead of a weird, bleak desolation, signs of vegetation began to appear.

The way, too, became more even, so they could travel much faster.

Mile after mile was covered, until they at length found themselves at the edge of a forest similar to the one they had entered before they arrived at the village of the Peils.

To their great joy they found a level, beaten path after a few minutes' search.

They had not proceeded more than a mile over this when our hero perceived a herd of animals resembling antelopes ahead of them. It was then that it occurred to him that he was very hungry, and longed for a taste of fresh meat.

Before the herd had discovered their approach he brought the *Traveler* to a halt.

"I'm going to get a shot at one of those fellows," said he, as he picked up his rifle. "They look like antelopes; but whatever they are, I'll bet they are fine eating."

"Go ahead," returned Tom; "but don't stray too far away. We'll follow you up as soon as we hear the report of your rifle."

Will walked out upon the deck and sprang lightly to the ground.

Bent upon dropping one of the animals, he started cautiously forward.

The boy had undertaken a much more difficult task than he had anticipated.

Just as he was thinking about drawing a bead upon one of the sleekest of the animals the whole herd became frightened at something and started away like the wind.

Will watched the direction they took and started forward on a run, bent upon having one of them, anyhow.

In about ten minutes he came upon them again, and succeeded in getting near enough for a shot.

Raising his rifle to his shoulder, he took careful aim, and pulled the trigger.

Crack! As the report rang out he saw the animal spring into the air and fall dead upon the ground.

With an exclamation of pleasure on his lips, Will started forward to skin his game, and be ready when the *Traveler* came up.

But as he neared the fallen animal he gave a start and recoiled a pace.

Bending over the carcass was an animal resembling a gorilla, which was at least ten feet high.

growl it left the carcass of the antelope and strode fiercely toward him.

The boy knew full well that if the gorilla, or whatever it might be called, once got its clutches upon him, he might as well bid adieu to the world forever.

Consequently, he had to kill or disable the beast, for if he started to run away he would be no match for it.

The gorilla was within fifteen yards of him when he drew his rifle to his shoulder and fired.

But he fired too quick, and as a natural consequence, his aim was bad.

The bullet did not hit the animal at all, but merely whistled by the side of its ugly-looking head.

As soon as our hero saw that his shot had not injured it he started to flee.

But he might just as well have stood stock still, for with a few enormous strides the gorilla was upon him.

Will could feel the creature's hot breath on the back of his neck, and then he was seized in a vise-like grip and lifted clear of the ground.

The boy closed his eyes and breathed a silent prayer, expecting every moment to be his last.

But, contrary to his expectations, he was not killed instantly, or even seriously harmed.

The huge beast uttered a sort of cooing noise, and then clasping Will tightly to its breast, started back to the spot where the carcass of the antelope lay.

Throwing Will over its right shoulder, it then stooped and lifted the antelope with its left hand and thrust it under its long, sinewy arm.

With a grunt of satisfaction the gorilla started off into the mazes of the underground forest.

Our hero was clutched tightly about the loins by the powerful hairy arm that held him, and struggle as he might he could not free himself.

His huge captor stalked along as easy as though it was but play to carry the burden it held in its arms.

It did not notice Will's frantic efforts to free himself, and becoming desperate, the boy endeavored to draw his knife from his belt.

He was going to kill the beast, if possible. He managed to draw the knife from his belt, and then, raising it in the air, he aimed a blow at the creature's back just behind the left shoulder blade.

Thud! Down came the knife with all the power Will could command, the blade burying itself clean to the hilt.

The next thing our hero knew he was flying headlong through the air.

He landed in a clump of bushes without being hurt much, and hastily scrambled out.

The gorilla was lying upon the ground, writhing in the agonies of death.

Without stopping to pick up the game he had shot, Will started through the bushes in the direction he had left the *Traveler*.

He reached her soon enough, as Tom had followed after him as soon as he heard the report of his rifle.

Our hero lost no time in clambering aboard, and then he related what had taken place.

Miles Saybrook shivered during the recital of the boy's adventure.

"I shouldn't like to have such a thing happen to me," he said, with a look of horror on his face.

"Nor I, begob!" put in Danny.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### AT THE CITY OF THE CENTROS.

Will Carding came to a halt the moment he beheld the huge animal.

The creature saw him at about the same time, and with a

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE CENTER OF ATTRACTION.

"We will go on board and follow this road, and not stop to shoot any more game for a while," spoke up Will.

It was with a sigh of relief that he took his station at the key-board and started the *Traveler* ahead again.

The farther they went over the broad path the more it appeared as though it was used frequently.

When about fifteen hours had passed since they left the sea they came to a halt and all turned in to get the sleep they so much needed.

It must have been eight hours later when all hands were suddenly awakened.

The *Traveler* was moving!

Will sprang to the nearest window and looked out.

The sight he saw was a surprising one.

Fully a hundred men, attired the same as those who had captured them in the village of the Peils, surrounded the *Traveler*, and were pushing her along at a smart gait.

Reaching over to the key-board, our hero pressed a knob and the wonderful invention started forward like the wind.

The savages were so much surprised at this movement that they released their hold upon it.

Tom took his place at the wheel and away they sped over the path, which had now widened into a broad roadway.

The hundred men, who had made the capture while our friends slept, started on a run after them, but were soon left far behind.

After ten minutes' run they suddenly emerged from the forest and beheld a veritable city of stone buildings before them.

Our hero slackened speed a little and then directed Tom to proceed to the center of the place and come to a halt.

His order was carried out, and presently they came to a stop and went out on deck, the professor and Captain Sylvester following.

A crowd of people of both sexes surged around and gazed at the *Traveler* in mute astonishment.

Determined to be as courteous as possible, Will took off his hat and made a sweeping bow to them.

This seemed to please the strange underground people, for they promptly returned the salute, and then made motions signifying that our friends were welcome.

Will deemed it advisable not to leave the deck until those whom they left behind arrived.

In a few minutes the party came up, and very much surprised they seemed when they beheld the *Traveler* in the center of their city, with its occupants standing calmly on her deck.

After a great deal of sign-making by both sides, Tom thought it safe to venture upon the ground.

Accordingly, rifle in hand, he sprang lightly from the deck and again bowed to the crowd.

Professor Langshan and Sylvester quickly followed, and began bowing right and left to the assemblage in a truly idiotic manner.

This seemed a source of amusement for the Centros, as we will now call the inhabitants, for they laughed and talked among themselves at a great rate, while they watched the antics of the pair of lunatics.

That the Centros were not altogether a bad lot of people soon became apparent, for in a few minutes a number of them came hurrying to the spot loaded down with a variety of luscious-looking fruit.

"Begob! this is what I call fine!" exclaimed Danny Dagan. "We are after strikin' a fine lot of people."

"Yes," returned Will, "we will stay here and rest for a while."

And so they did stay there, and for a much longer time than they expected, too.

It would be hard to express the joy manifested by Enid Strathmore and her maid when they saw the *Traveler* calmly resting in the center of the city of stone houses.

They naturally thought that deliverance was at hand.

Mervura, too, seemed to share their joy, for she was anxious to get back to Peil and marry her lover.

The warriors who occupied the chariots seemed to be more than surprised when they saw the boat on wheels. It had got to their home ahead of them, and how they knew not.

But when they learned that the *Traveler* had arrived several days in advance of them, they could hardly believe that it was the same mysterious concern they had captured in Peil.

But they were forced to acknowledge that it was when they recognized those whom they had seen upon it.

The Centros were not aware of there being any other route from the land of the Peils to their country save the one they always traversed.

Consequently it dawned upon the charioteers that our friends were something more than human.

The *Traveler* had remained in the city because our friends were satisfied that the warriors who had the girls prisoners belonged to that place.

Will determined to wait until they came in, and in the meantime make friends with the inhabitants of the place.

This was easily accomplished; for before they had been there two hours the Centros made signs to them that the entire city was at their disposal.

After they had been there a couple of days the professor and Captain Sylvester refused to remain aboard the *Traveler* any longer, and took up their abode with some of the Centros, who took them in willingly enough.

Will concluded to allow the demented pair to have their own way until the time arrived for their departure.

The two boys, Danny and Saybrook, spent their time in hunting and fishing and striving to learn the language of the Centros, though they did not succeed much in the latter.

Thus matters stood when the party of Centros arrived with Enid, her maid and Mervura.

The Centros now held the *Traveler* and her crew in awe, and they made no objections when their captives took up their quarters aboard the wonderful boat on wheels, which had arrived at their city so far in advance of the chariots.

The language of the Centros was similar to that of the Peils, and Mervura soon gleaned from them that the men who rode in the chariots had gone toward the surface of the earth for the purpose of gathering a certain kind of moss that grew only in that region.

As soon as our hero found that Mervura could talk with the Centros, he requested her to ask them to show their visitors some of the wonders of their country.

At first she could not make them understand, but when she told them that our friends had never been aware that people lived underground before, they understood what was desired of them, and at once signified their willingness to conduct the party around.

"Tell the people of the outside world," they said to Mervura, "that this city is built upon the crust that covers the center of the earth, and that the center of attraction is directly beneath us, and can be shown to them in one hour's journey!"

When Will and Tom learned this they nearly went wild.

"We are ready to go at once," they declared.

Enid insisted upon seeing the wonderful sight, too, and, of course, Will allowed her to have her wish.

Half an hour after the proposition was made the party was ready to start.

It consisted of twelve of the Centros, Will, Tom, Danny, Saybrook, the two girls and Mervura.

Six Centros led the way, and Will and Enid, who got along swimmingly for young people of such a short acquaintance, came next.

Then came Danny, closely followed by Tom Hartley and Verna, and Saybrook and Mervura, while the remaining six Centros brought up the rear.

Out of the city they proceeded, down a steep hill, which kept continually getting steeper, Will thought, since he could not see anything of the city at all, after they had been out fifteen minutes.

Presently the party came to a halt at the mouth of a shaft which was about twenty feet in diameter.

Fixed in this was a strong elevator, which was run by hand.

All hands stepped upon this, save the six Centros who brought up the rear, and these, Mervura said, remained behind to work the elevator.

When everything was ready the elevator began to descend in a very rapid manner.

Down, down it went, the speed increasing, it seemed, until our friends almost held their breath.

For ten minutes they descended, and then the elevator came to a halt.

Then a small door was opened in the bottom, and all hands took a look beneath them.

What they saw was truly a grand sight.

A vast chamber that was so perfectly round that it could not have varied the sixteenth of an inch in any part of it.

It was about two hundred and fifty feet in diameter, and from its wall—we say wall, because there were no sides, bottom or top to it, only one circular inclosure—brilliant zig-zag flashes of light came continually.

A low, whirring noise could be heard, and this was all.

To illustrate and prove that this chamber was really the center of attraction, one of the Centros tossed his cap through the opening in the floor of the elevator.

Down it went, until it reached the center of the chamber, and then it stopped in midair!

For an instant it remained perfectly still, and then the flashes of light darted forth and seized it from all points.

Even as our friends looked the cap vanished before their very eyes!

This so startled Mervura that she gave a cry, and thrust her head nearer the opening in the floor to get a better view.

As she did so she missed her calculation, and before any one could prevent her, she pitched headforemost through the opening down into the circular chamber.

A cry of horror left the lips of her companions; but nothing could save her!

When Will saw the unlucky woman come to a stop in midair he turned his head.

When he looked again a few seconds later, Mervura had vanished.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE DOCTOR TALKS.

No pen can describe the feelings of Will Carding and his companions as they gazed down into the mysterious circular chamber, where the unfortunate Mervura had been so suddenly transformed into nothingness.

"My God! this is awful!" gasped Tom Hartley. "Let us go back; I have seen enough of the center of attraction."

His companions agreed with him, and as they now had no one to interpret their wishes to the Centros, Will motioned to them that they wished to go up.

They were promptly understood, and the next moment they were slowly ascending.

It took over half an hour to go up, but when they at length arrived at the top it was with a feeling of great relief that they stepped from the elevator.

The twelve Centros who had shown them the wonderful sight seemed very much distressed over the awful fate of Mervura; but they were not more so than our friends, since they had recognized the woman as one of their party, and also because she was the only one who could understand the language of the Centros.

The walk back to the city was made in silence.

When they reached there our friends promptly went aboard the *Traveler* and began discussing the question of starting on the journey for the earth's surface.

Miles Saybrook was more than anxious to get back to his home at the North Pole, and he said, with great emphasis, that if he ever did reach the city of the Meighlorfs he would never leave it again, under any consideration.

But little had been seen of the professor or Captain Sylvester since Enid and the French girl had arrived in the city. The two imbeciles seemed to like the new quarters they occupied very well, and were becoming so badly demented that at his last meeting with them they had utterly failed to recognize Will.

Our hero was considerably worried over this. He knew that the professor was the sole owner of the *Traveler*, and, consequently, he wanted to take the poor old man back with them when they started.

But neither of the crazed pair could be induced to come aboard the wonderful boat on wheels, nor did they seem to recognize it.

After a rather lengthy talk upon the subject uppermost in their minds, our hero remarked:

"It strikes me that we had better remain here a few days. As yet we have seen very little of this place. When we do strike out for the return trip we must contrive to take the professor with us. As for Captain Sylvester and the men who came with him, it matters not whether they get back or not, unless, of course, they want to go."

"It looks to me as though the doctor is trying to put up a job on us," observed Tom. "He does not remain aboard the *Traveler* at all, but associates with the natives continually."

"He says he is after learnin' their language," spoke up Danny.

"Well," returned Will, "perhaps he is."

In view of the fact that there might be treachery in the air, Will concluded it advisable to have a continual watch kept from that time out.

After a rest of perhaps eight or ten hours Will went out on deck and took a look about the city.

He had not been there over two or three minutes before he beheld the doctor and the sailor, who had been the companions of Sylvester, approaching, followed by half a dozen of the Centros.

Will exchanged friendly greetings with them, after which the doctor asked to speak to him in private a few minutes.

Of course our hero granted this request.

Before the doctor had spoken fifty words Will found that he had misjudged the man. He had seemingly avoided their company because, being a man of a literary turn of mind, he determined to learn all he could about the place and write a book when he got home.

He stated that he had visited the center of attraction several

days before at the request of the hagono, or chief of the city, with whom he had become quite friendly.

"The language of the Centros," said he, "is quite similar to the Danish tongue, and as I am quite fluent in the latter I soon learned to make myself understood here. I have learned many things, among which is that there is a road leading to the South Pole, similar to the one we came over; and also that the biggest part of the earth's interior, outside of what we have seen, is a mass of fire."

"Well, since you have learned these important things, what do you propose to do?" asked our hero.

"Go back with you to your own country, if you will take me. My sailor companion will go, too, providing you will promise him that he shall not be turned over to the authorities for being in the employ of a kidnaper and outlaw in general."

Then Will fully saw the point of what the doctor was driving at. Not only the sailor, but he, himself, was afraid of being placed in the hands of the United States authorities if they went back to civilization in the *Traveler*.

Our hero hastened to assure him that nothing of the kind would take place, and that if the pair wished to be taken to the United States when the *Traveler* returned they would be welcome to go, and leave her at the first place they chose after arriving there.

"I believe that you will keep your word," said the doctor. "Now, for the first time, I will make known my name to you."

He handed the boy a card as he spoke.

On it was engraved:

"PARSON ANGELO, M. D.,

"No. — Fleet Street,

"London."

"I'll admit, he hastened to say, "that my reputation is not of the very best in the place where I am known, and I promise you that I will lead a more honest life if I ever get back to civilization again. As a physician, I consider myself as good as the average."

Will eyed the man curiously for a short time, and then replied:

"Very well, doctor; use my friends and myself in a decent manner, and you will be treated as a friend and a companion."

"Thank you!" was the doctor's answer. "And now, may I ask when you are going to start for the surface of the earth?"

"As soon as we see a little more of this wonderful place."

"I have promised to go with the chief of the city to see the temple of fire; will you go along and see it? It is a wonderful sight, he tells me."

"When are you going?"

"He is ready to take us at any moment."

"Suppose we go now, then?"

"Very well; go and inform your friends. I will hunt up the chief."

The doctor started for the house of the chief, and Will entered the cabin to tell his companions of the rather curious conversation that had passed between the doctor and himself.

"He is a funny sort of a man, begob!" exclaimed Danny, when our hero had concluded his story.

"But I agree with Mr. Carding, that we should not be hard upon him, even if he has been a bad man, as he has acknowledged," spoke up the pretty Enid Strathmore, who was very happy since she was under the protection of friends.

The rest of the party nodded assent, whether they thought she was right or not.

Neither Saybrook nor the Irishman cared to go and see the temple of fire, so they agreed to guard the *Traveler* until the return of their friends.

A few minutes later, Will, Tom and the two girls went out on deck and found the doctor and a number of the Centros awaiting them.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE TEMPLE OF FIRE.

The chief of the Centros was among those who were waiting, and he promptly signified that he was ready to lead the way to the temple of fire.

Then he motioned our friends to follow, at the same time starting toward a large, flat-looking building that was used as a stable for the huge horses of that country.

When Will saw them bring out a number of horses hitched to a chariot, he seemed surprised.

"Is the temple of fire far from here?" he asked, turning to the doctor.

"About a day's journey, I am told," was the reply.

"Then we had better take some provisions with us," said Tom.

"That has been provided for," the doctor returned. "See those packages in the chariot; they contain a good supply of first-class food."

The chief now motioned all who were going to get into the vehicle, and the two boys at once assisted the girls to a seat near the front of the chariot. The others then clambered in, and the driver seized the reins.

A moment later they started amid the cheering of a number of the Centros, and the two demented men, who had gathered about to see them off.

They took a course somewhat similar to the one they had pursued when they went to see the center of attraction, only they appeared to be following a level road this time.

As they rolled along our friends noticed that in many places the ground was well tilled. Numerous vegetable plants could be seen in even rows on almost every hand.

At the expiration of six hours the chief ordered a halt.

Dinner was then eaten, and our friends could but acknowledge that the food, consisting of both meat and vegetables, was excellent.

The repast being finished, the journey was again resumed.

There was but little change in the general aspect of the underground country, and after a while it grew rather wearisome to our friends.

But when another six hours had passed, they suddenly came upon the ruins of a city.

Our friends now noticed, for the first time, that the temperature was growing decidedly warm.

The nearer they approached to the ruins the hotter it became, and this was soon explained by the doctor, who had been engaged in conversation with the chief for a long time.

"The temple of fire is situated in this ruined city," said he. "A certain portion of the earth consists of a molten mass of fire, and this spot is one of the outlets of it."

"It was the fire that ruined this city, then, I suppose?" said Will.

"Yes, or, more properly speaking, it was an earthquake shock that did the business. It happened in the neighborhood of two hundred years ago, the chief tells me."

Further conversation was now checked, as the chariot came to a halt.

The Centros promptly sprang out, and our friends followed.

The chief pointed out a building that was the least harmed of the lot, and all hands started toward it.

It was of the style and construction of the most ancient temples, and was really a remarkable piece of architecture.

The heat that filled the air was now almost unbearable, but, determined to stick it out and see all that was to be seen, our friends followed on.

At length they stood within fifty feet of the imposing edifice.

Will noticed that the ground was hard and dry, and that the heat from it could be felt through the soles of his shoes.

Suddenly the chief darted forward and seized the end of a long rod that connected with the massive door of the temple.

The next moment he gave a jerk upon it, and the door flew open.

Our friends will never forget the sight that followed.

A double column of flame shot out and completely enveloped the entire front of the building.

But this was for only an instant, then it slowly gathered itself in again, and the interior of the temple could be seen.

From a circular opening in the floor pillar after pillar of flame shot, each burst of a different color, it seemed; and long before our friends got tired of looking at it every hue of the rainbow had been represented.

The scene was one of terrific grandeur, and, though it was too hot, by far, for any degree of comfort, our friends were loath to leave it.

But the chief suddenly released his hold upon the rod, and the door of the temple shut to with a slam.

"Come!" said he, in his own language; "we will go now."

The words had scarcely left his lips when there was a deafening explosion, and all hands were thrown to the ground.

Will and Tom were the first to spring to their feet, and they lost no time in lifting the girls from the hot ground.

Then they turned their eyes upon the temple, and saw the roof had disappeared from it, and that the flames had risen to a height of thirty feet above the building.

The faces of the Centros showed that they were almost overcome by fear, and with one accord they rushed from the spot.

Our friends quickly followed them, knowing that the explosion that had just taken place was something out of the usual line.

No one was hurt, and it did not take long to reach the chariot.

Instead of turning the horses and striking out over the back track, the driver made a turn, skirting the ruined city, and kept on in the same direction they had been going ever since they set out to visit the temple of fire.

"Where are we being taken now?" asked our hero, addressing the doctor.

"Home, the chief says," was the reply.

"But we should have turned around."

"I don't know. He says we are going direct for the city; that is all I know."

Will said no more.

The hours flitted by, and the powerful horses trotted along untiringly.

At length Enid suddenly arose from her seat, and gave a cry of surprise.

"Look!" she exclaimed. "There is the city!"

Her companions saw that what she said was true.

But they were approaching the city from a point directly opposite to the one they had left it!

"What does this mean?" asked Will.

"It means," returned the doctor, who had been talking with the chief, "that we have made a complete circuit around the center of attraction, and are now back where we started from."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### AN EXCITING CHASE.

When our friends arrived at the *Traveler*, a new surprise awaited them.

They had not been away more than twenty-four hours, yet in that time a marriage had taken place in the city of the Centros.

The daughter of the chief had fallen deeply in love with the sailor who had been under the command of Captain Sylvester, and while her father was away she married him.

The girl was very good-looking for one of her race, and what she saw in such a greasy, hang-dog looking fellow as the sailor, neither Will nor his companions could comprehend.

Danny Dagan, who told the story of the curious affair, said that he considered either Miles Saybrook or himself far better-looking than the bridegroom, and yet no fair, young creature had fallen in love with them.

But the "getting married" part of the affair was not all. After she had committed the rash act, it occurred to her that her father would not be pleased at her choice.

Consequently, she informed her husband that she was ready to flee with him to his country, for, if they stayed in the city, her father would in all probability get mad and slay them both on his return.

The sailor was ready to go, although he had not the least idea where he would fetch up.

Whereupon the bride ordered six horses hitched to one of the chariots, and had an abundant supply of provisions placed in it.

The professor and Captain Sylvester knew no better than to accept the invitation to go along, and so they boarded the chariot to accompany the bridal couple on their wedding trip.

One of the bride's trusted servants acted as driver, and, with the four seated comfortably in the chariot, he started the horses on their upward journey to the earth's surface.

That was all the Irishman knew about it, but it was enough to make our friends smile, the whole thing being about the most ludicrous affair they had ever heard of.

But when the chief heard of what had taken place he went into a terrible rage.

The first thing he did was to slay the priest who had performed the marriage service, and then, through the medium of the doctor, he asked Will to use the *Traveler* in helping him to pursue the eloping couple.

Our hero agreed to do so without any hesitation. He had made up his mind to leave the center of the earth, anyhow, and, whether the chariot was overtaken or not, he meant to keep on till the surface was reached.

Of course Will knew that his companions were agreed upon the matter of leaving as soon as possible, or he would not have given his answer to the chief so readily.

The enraged ruler of the Centros lost no time in getting ready to start out after his wayward daughter.

In half an hour he was ready to start, with three chariots, each containing a score of well-armed men.

Then the upward journey began, the *Traveler* bringing up the rear.

The chariot containing the wedded pair had about fourteen hours' start, and was drawn by the very best horses that could be had in that section.

No wonder, then, that, after six days had passed, they had not been overtaken.

The route was entirely new to our friends on the *Traveler*, until they came to the place where they parted company with the warriors on their downward trip.

There was a roar like the sound of distant thunder, followed by a hissing noise like the escaping of steam, and then a column of water burst from the hole the four had taken refuge in, sweeping all before it.

ABOVE GROUND ONCE MORE.

They were not an instant too soon, for the angry tide went

The professor just managed to reach the door of the cabin, and then he staggered into a chair and fainted.

While the doctor attended to him, the boys ran the *Traveler* to the rock they had seen him sitting upon, and came to a halt.

The doctor quickly bandaged the old man's wounded head, and then revived him from his faint.

But, instead of letting him talk, he administered a drug that promptly sent him to sleep.

"You will have to wait a couple of hours to learn how the man escaped in such a wonderful manner," said the doctor. "But I have my doubts that he will ever be able to describe what has happened to him."

"Why so?" asked Miles Saybrook.

"Because the man is no longer an imbecile. That wound he has upon his head has adjusted his balance of mind. Wait until he awakes, and see if I am not right."

"I trust that what you say may be true," observed Enid Strathmore, speaking for the first time since the professor had come aboard.

"So do all of us, beyond a doubt," put in Will.

"I won't guarantee that what I have said is true," returned the doctor. "But it is my humble opinion that it is."

"I wonder what became of his companions?" said Tom. "Maybe they are somewhere around this rock, either dead or in a helpless position."

"That's so," replied Will. "Let's go out and take a look."

Leaving the sleeping professor in charge of the doctor and Saybrook, the rest of the party left the vessel and walked up to the rock.

The first thing they noticed was a slight sprinkling of blood on the rock, which, they concluded, came from the wound on the professor's head.

Will led the way behind the rock, and discovered the mouth of a narrow passage.

All hands halted before this, and endeavored to pierce the gloom inside.

"Listen!" exclaimed Tom, suddenly. "I thought I heard a groan."

Immediately the utmost silence was maintained.

Then all distinctly heard a groan.

"Get a lantern, Danny," said Will. "We must go in there. Somebody is in distress."

The Irishman obeyed quickly enough.

Will then led the way into the passage.

When he had walked perhaps ten feet, he held the lantern aloft, and came to a halt.

Before him lay the forms of three human beings, and close by them was the mouth of what appeared to be a huge natural well.

A furious boiling noise could be heard coming from the depths of this, and all parts of the passage betrayed signs of having been visited by water quite recently.

"Here are the companions of the professor," said Will. "The groans we heard prove that one of them, at least, is alive. Catch hold! We will carry them outside in the light of day."

One at a time, the bodies were carried outside through the passage.

Sure enough, they were the runaway bridal couple and Captain Sylvester.

But two of them were stone dead, and these were Sylvester and the unlucky bride.

The sailor still lived, but had a broken leg and appeared to be injured internally.

The man was carried tenderly aboard the *Traveler*.

When the doctor saw him, he shook his head.

"He can't live over an hour," said he.

Then he gave the wounded sailor a stimulant, which rallied him for a while.

"Tell us how you came to be where we found you?" said Will.

This the man proceeded to do, in the best way he knew how.

The substance of what he said was that when the four fled from the chariot and entered the hole, they carried a couple of packages of provisions, and hoped to make their way into some hidden retreat where they could throw their pursuers off their track.

But they had scarcely entered the place when they found themselves ascending like a rocket.

The very ground they were standing upon was going up with them!

For perhaps two hours their ascent kept up, and then they came to a sudden stop.

Here they were forced to remain for many hours, and had it not been that there was a current of fresh air from somewhere, they would certainly have perished.

How long they remained there, the sailor could not say.

He only knew that they had eaten all the provisions they had, and were getting very hungry when they again began to move upward without the least warning.

So fast did they rise that their breath was nearly taken from them, and then, after a horrible spell of dreadful anxiety, there came a violent shock, and he knew no more till a few minutes previous to the arrival of our friends.

The wounded man lived but a few minutes after the recital of his strange story.

Under the direction of Will, a soft spot was found and a grave dug.

Into this were placed the bodies of the runaway bridal couple and Captain Sylvester.

Then the *Traveler* moved on her upward course, and in a short time emerged from the crater.

Miles Saybrook gave such a loud shout of joy when he beheld his home below him that the professor was awakened from his sleep.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### HOME AT LAST.

When the professor awoke, he expressed a strong desire to eat.

While a suitable meal was being prepared for him, he happened to glance out of the cabin window.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "so we are above ground once more! But how is it? We were away down on the shores of the lake; my enemy was in possession of the *Traveler*, and——"

"It is all right now, professor," interrupted Will; "you have been very sick for a few days. Your enemy is dead and buried, and we have rescued the girls from the underground savages, and all is now likely to turn out O. K."

"As I told you," said the doctor, in a whisper, to our hero, "he is as sane as he ever was."

"And all that he has lately passed through is a blank?"

"Exactly."

"It is a remarkable occurrence."

"Our entire journey has been a remarkable one," spoke up Tom.

"That is true," and Will nodded in a manner to indicate that henceforth he should not regard anything that might happen as extraordinary.

The *Traveler* was over halfway down the mountain before the inhabitants of the ice-bound country saw them.

As soon as they did see the wonderful boat on wheels, the streets of the city were filled with people.

The *Traveler* did not come to a halt until she arrived in front of the building that flew the United States flag.

A shout of welcome went up as Miles Saybrook stepped upon the ground, followed by the rest of our friends.

In a speech that lasted over two hours, Saybrook related the details of his wonderful trip.

When this was over, a grand carnival was gotten up, which lasted two days.

After this, Will and Tom settled down to overhaul the *Traveler* and get ready to return to the United States.

Professor Langshan, who was quite feeble, assisted them all he could.

At the end of a week, they were ready to leave, being well stocked with provisions for their journey.

During all this time our friends had used very strong arguments to induce Miles Saybrook to accompany them.

But it was utterly useless. He had experienced quite enough dangers, he said, and would remain in the land of his birth the rest of his life.

Seeing that Saybrook could not be induced to go with them, Will tried to get one of the Meighlorfs to leave his native place and accompany them home.

But it could not be done; and so our friends started on the return trip alone, after bidding good-by to the North Pole and its inhabitants.

The calm sea that furnished the food and other useful articles for the Meighlorfs was soon crossed, and the rock-bound coast, where the entrance to the tunnel was, they quickly reached.

The two girls, who had passed through so many dangers and stirring scenes, were not the least bit alarmed when they set out on the journey through the tunnel.

In due time they reached the other end, where the frozen sen-

tinel had been discovered, and here it was that they experienced the wonderful change in the weather.

But, as the reader knows, the *Electric Traveler* was built for any kind of weather, and all that our friends had to do was to keep inside the cabin as much as possible.

Though the professor's mind was now all right, he was quite feeble, and it seemed that he would never entirely recover his old vitality again.

He turned over to Will the entire management of the *Traveler*, and was content to sit and doze in the soft armchair in the cabin near the keyboard of the battery.

Will followed the same course they came over, as nearly as possible.

At the suggestion of the doctor, he determined to look up the *Invincible*, and see how she had fared since they last saw her.

But when they arrived at the spot where the air ship had left her, they found naught but a wreck, and not the least sign of a human being.

"Poor fellows!" muttered the doctor. "They have, no doubt, perished a miserable death from the cold and exposure."

The prow of the *Traveler* was now turned homeward, and away they sped over the frozen deep.

The days passed by, and still they kept on.

Four times they were blocked in heavy falls of snow, but at last they reached a portion of the country where the climate was much milder.

It was just eight months after the *Traveler* started from Buffalo that they came in sight of Lake Erie, one bright, moonlight night.

Tom steered straight for the hidden workshop under the wharf in Buffalo, and in due time they arrived there.

Everything was just as they had left it, owing to the fact that the professor had hired the place for a year, and the time was not up yet.

It was well along toward morning when the vessel was secured in the place where she had been built, so our friends concluded to remain there until daylight.

The next morning all hands repaired to a hotel, to remain a few days, before Enid and her maid set out to return to England, where the relatives of the former resided.

Will had been in the city but a few hours when he learned a startling piece of news.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE END.

The news which our hero learned was that he was the heir to a large estate in the State of Ohio, where his parents had been born.

He also learned that, if he failed to put in an appearance and claim the legacy by the time he attained his majority, it would go to an uncle of his.

Of course, he was much surprised when he learned of this, and it naturally set him to thinking.

He knew that he had an uncle somewhere in the land of the living, but he had always been told by his parents that he was a scapegoat.

It had been years since Will had seen him, but he was satisfied that he would still recognize him.

On further inquiry, he found that his uncle lived in Toledo.

Will determined to call upon him as soon as Enid Strathmore had taken her departure for England.

He could not help thinking of the attempt upon his life, when Tom Hartley came so near being murdered in place of him.

He desired to see what effect his appearance would have upon his uncle.

As Professor Langshan was the brother-in-law of Enid, he concluded that it would be the proper thing for him to escort her back to England.

Of course, this was agreeable to all hands, and in due time they set out.

Will promised Enid that he would visit her in the near future, and they parted with the understanding that they were something more than mere friends.

The next day our hero and Tom set out for two different places—Will to Toledo, and Tom to his home in Detroit.

On his arrival in Toledo, Will promptly set about to find the address of his uncle.

This was not a very difficult job, and it was not long before he stood on the front stoop of the residence containing the proper number, ringing the doorbell.

His summons was answered by a servant, who informed him that his uncle was in.

Will stepped into the parlor, and was met by a sinister-looking man, whose face plainly showed signs of debauchery and dissipation.

"How do you do, uncle?" said the boy, calmly, at the same time extending his hand.

As the words left his lips, the man took a step or two backward, and turned deathly pale.

"Who are you?" he managed to gasp.

"Why, I am your nephew—Will Carding; don't you know me?"

"I—I thought you were dead—drowned in Lake Erie. I—I—"

"Yes, you thought I was tied securely in a sack and thrown off the dock, didn't you? Well, I am here now!"

A sudden change came over the man's face, and his features became transformed into those of a demon.

Stepping to a desk, he seized a revolver, and started toward Will, with murder in his eyes.

"Curse you!" he hissed. "If I failed in killing you once, I will not this time!"

But Will was too quick for him.

Springing forward like a ball from a cannon, he struck the would-be murderer full in the stomach with his head, and sent him in a heap on the floor, in a gasping condition.

"Now, then," said the boy, as he calmly picked up the revolver, "I will give you just one hour to leave the city, and if you ever show your face in the United States again, I will have you arrested!"

With these words, he turned on his heel and left the house.

The next morning Will was astounded when he read of a suicide in one of the city papers. And no wonder, for it was his uncle who had killed himself.

The paper also stated that he left a confession as to how he had endeavored to wrong a young man out of some valuable property left him by his grandfather.

But little more remains to be told.

When Will attained his majority, he came into possession of a nice estate and a snug income.

Tom Hartley had also been lucky, to a certain extent, for he was now the captain of one of the largest lake steamers.

Professor Langshan died soon after he arrived in England with Enid Strathmore and the French girl.

Danny Dagan was in the employ of Will, who was sole owner of the *Electric Traveler*, having purchased it from the professor at a very low price.

The doctor, who had resolved to reform, kept his word, and to-day he has quite an extensive practice in the city of Buffalo.

Soon after Will came in possession of his property he had some visitors from the other side of the Atlantic.

They were Enid Strathmore and Verna, the French girl, who was no longer her maid, but an adopted sister.

The girls were accompanied by the former's guardian, who was a wealthy, whole-souled Englishman.

They stayed in this country over a year, and during that time there was a double wedding.

Will, of course, married Enid; and Tom—well, Tom was very well satisfied with the pretty French girl, and he took her for better or worse.

Up to last accounts Danny Dagan had not married; but, if such a thing happens, you may rest assured that you will hear of it, as Danny is now one of the best-known politicians in the State of Ohio.

And so ends our story of the most wonderful journey on record.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 18, will contain "The Moonshiners of the Ozarks; or, The Boy Who Worked for Uncle Sam," by Thomas P. Montfort.

This is a rattling story, depicting the life of mountaineers and moonshiners in one of the wildest districts of the United States.

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